

Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation:
An Engaged Compassion Approach to Difficult Conversations About Race and Racism

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Abstract

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This dissertation focuses on Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation (ERAST), a program I co-created for engaging difficult conversations about race and racism. In the first part, I describe the two foundations of our program, which are (1) critical race and racial formation theories, and (2) the cultivation of compassion through a contemplative practice called the Compassion Practice. I then describe how we synthesize these foundations to create ERAST and provide a description of the flow of the program. The core aim of ERAST is to cultivate compassion for oneself and others as part of the process of embodying race. This form of embodying requires deepening one's understanding of race and racism structurally and interpersonally, while also reflecting on the impact of one's own racialization for perceiving the world. The Compassion Practice offers crucial skills for tending to the internal and external reactivities that frequently arise in this process. The unique perspective of our internal worlds offered by the Compassion Practice provides tools for increasing resilience, extending self-care, and sustainably engaging racial justice efforts.

The second part of this dissertation focuses on a qualitative study evaluating the effectiveness of ERAST with a group of undergraduate students. I employed a case study methodology to gain an understanding of what participants experienced during the program. Their experiences formed the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of ERAST. A priori and in

vivo coding yielded rich data that lead to helpful insights for how well participants inculcated important learning goals, what they found useful, and areas for improvement. Overall, this study demonstrates the transformative potential of combining engaged compassionate awareness with cutting edge theories of race and racism, a core assumption that drove the formation of ERAST.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Thesis

A crucial and often overlooked aspect of effectively engaging issues of race and racism is our ability to notice our own inner worlds. Many conversations about race and racism become derailed due to a lack of awareness of our own emotional states and how to tend to them. How we respond internally and externally to our emotions has profound implications for the way we relate to others. In racialized contexts, this commonly gives rise to destructive interactions that hinder or prevent insight, learning, connection, and cultivating interracial relationships. My dissertation addresses this vital and often unnoticed dynamic. I have co-created a program of racial awareness and embodiment that combines critical race and racial formation theories and a spiritual practice known as the Compassion Practice in order to cultivate the skills necessary to engage in deep, meaningful, authentic, and often times difficult conversations about race and racism. This program is called Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation (ERAST).

ERAST is designed to equip participants who complete the program with the tools and skills to be able to more compassionately and courageously engage in difficult conversations about race and racism. Through compassion-based contemplative practices, participants develop the foundational skills necessary for compassionately embodying (learning, understanding, knowing, feeling, sensing, listening) their own racialization and engaging compassionate actions flowing from their embodiment. Though we have focused ERAST around facilitating conversations, the tools participants acquire will help in a diverse range of settings.

Discussion of the Problem

When we talk about race we are intrinsically talking about our bodies, the intersection of our many identities, the way we understand the world, and our conception of how that world is structured. Many conversations about race become reactive because of the lack of attention given to the importance of emotions in this process. Emotions are a central component in human cognition and meaning-making. Yet most of us never have the opportunity to compassionately and non-judgmentally bring these emotions into conversations about race and racism. They are categorically dismissed as irrational or are marginalized when they arise. The result is that an integral part of our identities and meaning-making is denied epistemological significance, and we are not allowed to be fully present.

Implicit bias, racial anxiety, and stereotype threat are important factors contributing to reactive emotions and conversations. The Perception Institute released a report in 2014 naming the significance of these factors in perpetuating racial and ethnic disparities and affecting day-to-day experiences.¹ Importantly, the authors recognize that addressing racism at the individual level is not sufficient and that structural and institutional foci are crucial.² However, the authors point out, “In order to challenge structural racialization and inequality in society’s institutions and culture, individuals must be equipped to modify patterns of behavior and persuaded to support policies that will do this work.”³ Their report draws on an impressive body of research to

¹ Rachel D. Godsil, Linda R. Tropp, Phillip Atiba Goff, and John A. Powell, *Addressing Implicit Bias, Racial Anxiety, and Stereotype Threat in Education and Health Care*, The Science of Equality, vol. 1 (Perception Institute, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society, and Center for Policing Equity, 2014), 9, accessed January 10, 2018, <http://perception.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Science-of-Equality.pdf>.

² Godsil et al., *Science of Equality*, 9.

³ Godsil et al., 9.

focus on these problems in education and health care settings. I focus primarily on the report's research relevant to educational settings.

(1) Implicit bias has gained considerable popularity as a major contributing factor to unconscious and unintentionally racist behavior and attitudes. Godsil et al. understand implicit racial bias “to include automatic stereotypes and attitudes that result from repeated exposure to cultural stereotypes of different racial groups that pervade society.”⁴ Emphasizing the important role of social categorization for meaning making, the authors note that the meanings associated with certain categories are far from neutral.⁵ Examples of this include stereotypes associating African Americans with characteristics such as laziness, as well as with poverty, and violence. They note that media portrayals along these lines remain prominent.

Their survey of implicit bias research “finds that implicit attitudes predict people's nonverbal behaviors, while explicit attitudes predict the content of people's words.”⁶ This is crucial for conversations as people respond to nonverbal behaviors during an initial encounter to gauge how the interaction might proceed, potentially souring the conversation before it even begins. Importantly, it is possible for negative stereotypes and attitudes to be automatically triggered despite conscious rejection of those negative stereotypes or attitudes.⁷ Targeting the reduction or elimination of implicit bias is clearly important. However, an exclusive focus on implicit bias may have “rebound effects” that trigger racial anxiety and stereotype threat.⁸ The need to address these concerns in conjunction with implicit bias becomes apparent.

⁴ Godsil et al., 22.

⁵ Godsil et al., 22.

⁶ Godsil et al., 26.

⁷ Godsil et al., 26.

⁸ Godsil et al., 26.

(2) Understanding and ameliorating racial anxiety is paramount for conversations about race and racism. Godsil et al. point out that “racial anxiety matters on multiple levels, and its effects can spill over into virtually every important life domain. ... When people experience the physical symptoms of anxiety during a cross-racial interaction, they often distance themselves, are less apt to share eye contact, and use a less friendly and engaging verbal tone – behaviors which can obviously undermine an interaction.”⁹ Furthermore, identifying whether the source of racial anxiety is bias or a concern that the interracial interaction will not go well is important for designing effective interventions.¹⁰ Racial anxiety is defined as “discomfort about the experience and potential consequences of interracial interaction. The primary effects are that people of color can be anxious that they will be the target of discrimination and hostile or distant treatment, and whites can be anxious that they will be assumed to be racist and, therefore, will be met with distrust or hostility.”¹¹

“Fear of rejection” during an interracial interaction prohibits members of different racial groups from engaging in them and “to presume that inaction by the member of the other racial group reflects lack of interest.”¹² This is true regardless of one’s racialization. A negative feedback loop can emerge in which a negative interracial interaction gives rise to fewer and lower quality subsequent cross race interactions.¹³ Not only does racial anxiety contribute to poor initial encounters across race, but it can also lead to decreased future interactions. Stress levels during these interactions are an important barometer of their quality, and lower stress levels

⁹ Godsil et al., 27.

¹⁰ Godsil et al., 28.

¹¹ Godsil et al., 10.

¹² Godsil et al., 30.

¹³ Godsil et al., 29.

during one interracial interaction contributes to the positive valence of later interracial experiences.¹⁴ Contemplative and spiritual practices that lower stress levels are important interventions for racial anxiety.

(3) Stereotype threat “can be triggered whenever a person is concerned that their actions or performance may confirm a negative stereotype about their group.”¹⁵ The authors identify two types of stereotype threat noting, “The term is most often used in the context of stereotypes about abilities or capacities...but stereotypes can also involve assumptions about character traits about a particular group.”¹⁶ Ability relevant stereotype threat is, “The fear that one’s group is less able than other groups to perform a valued activity.”¹⁷ Character-relevant stereotype threat involves assumptions about character traits of a particular group.

Ability relevant stereotype threat is the norm for Latino and black students in academia, who routinely face negative stereotypes about their ability to perform well academically.¹⁸ People aware of a negative stereotype about their group must divide their attention between the task at hand and concerns about being seen stereotypically. This diverts cognitive resources away from the task at hand and inhibits maximal performance. A notable example of this was the introduction of high stakes testing in California schools in 2006. Graduation rates substantially fell for students of color and female students, while the graduation rates for white male students with similar grades remained the same.¹⁹

¹⁴ Godsil et al., 29.

¹⁵ Godsil et al., 31.

¹⁶ Godsil et al., 31.

¹⁷ Godsil et al., 31.

¹⁸ Godsil et al., 31.

¹⁹ Godsil et al., 38.

Character-relevant stereotype threat concerns “whether we are seen as adhering to prevailing morals or norms.”²⁰ Most of us care about how we are perceived by others. Prevailing moral norms dictate that to be racist is to be immoral, and many white people are concerned about being seen as racist or prejudiced.²¹ In addition to reflecting an inaccurate conception of racism as pathological and individual, this perception is also a major barrier to engaging conversations about race and racism for white people. A notable behavioral effect in the studies cited about racially-charged conversations is white people distancing themselves further from black conversation partners than from white partners.²² The authors raise two important points about character-relevant stereotype threat. White participants’ levels of implicit bias did not predict whether they sat further away from their black conversation partners.²³ Rather, their level of concern about being seen as racist predicted their actions. That is, character-relevant stereotype threat, not implicit bias, was the crucial factor in predicting their behavior. This has implications for designing effective interventions. The second point is that nonverbal behavior has an effect on those who experience it, in this case the behavior of distancing.²⁴ People subject to nonverbal behavior tend to reciprocate it. This can heighten connection or division. In this study, researchers found that black interviewees for a job application reciprocated the distancing behavior of the white interviewer, who then rated the black applicant as significantly less qualified for the job and less calm and composed.²⁵ Let this soak in for a moment. The white

²⁰ Godsil et al., 32.

²¹ Godsil et al., 32.

²² Godsil et al., 32.

²³ Godsil et al., 32-33.

²⁴ Godsil et al., 33.

²⁵ Godsil et al., 33.

interviewer (experiencing character-relevant stereotype threat) distances themselves from the black interviewee, who then mirrors the distancing behavior of the white interviewer, and is then seen by the white interviewer as unfit for the job. The character-relevant stereotype threat of the white interviewer becomes the reason why the black candidate is “unfit” for the job. All of this is happening at an unconscious level for the white interviewer. This study clearly demonstrates how stereotype threat on the part of whites perpetuates racist social structures. The need for effective interventions for stereotype threat is paramount.

I assert that reducing implicit bias, racial anxiety, and stereotype threat must involve compassion-based contemplative and spiritual practices in the context of transformative education about race and racism. Understanding the internal movements (feelings, emotions, reactivities, sensations, impulses, etc.) that arise within us during conversations about race and racism is actually the key to sustaining deep, meaningful, and transformative engagement with issues of race and racism. Our strong reactions and emotions are guides for what is most important to us. It is our habitual responses to them that prevents us from understanding and harnessing their wisdom. What most of us lack are the skills for understanding how they are trying to guide us.

Discussion of the Thesis

Fruitfully engaging difficult conversations about race and racism involves two crucial foundations – compassion-based contemplative practices and a structural approach to education about race and racism. Cultivating compassion hones the capacities necessary for understanding how our emotions are trying to help us and enables deep relational connection with ourselves and others. It empowers us to see the world unfiltered by our own desires and agendas and to

radically humanize how we view and engage people. Compassion is also action. Without it, compassion devolves into feckless sentimentality.

A central focus of our program explicitly involves participants creating an intellectual and embodied understanding of themselves as racialized beings. This requires deeply engaging difficult personal, social, historical, and cultural issues of race and racism in an inter-racial context. This kind of transformative learning is frequently identity-shifting and destabilizes normative understandings and assumptions about the way things are, particularly for white people. Feelings of vulnerability are almost always present in these contexts. In a culture such as the United States, which prizes uncompromising strength and projecting images of rugged individualism, asking people to take a “long, loving look at the real” of racism is no easy task.²⁶ Yet we believe that racial justice must include such conversations, and compassion practices form a critical foundation for this process.

Compassion alone is not enough, however. Exploring our own racialization and conversations about race and racism must also include the structural insights of both the theory of racial formation and critical race theory (CRT). Race is a complex social phenomenon structuring our society.²⁷ It heavily influences our perception of the world, how we make sense of that world, and how we group information. Most of these processes happen subconsciously, and occur regardless of our conscious intent.²⁸ Furthermore, racialized social structures limit the

²⁶ William McNamara quoted in Walter J Burghardt, “Contemplation: A Long Loving Look at the Real,” *Church*, no.5 (Winter 1989), 14-17.

²⁷ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, “Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation,” *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 3 (1997): 465-480, doi:10.2307/2657316.

²⁸ Godsil et al., *The Science of Equality*, 22.

chances for success of those who are at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.²⁹ Along with Michael Omi and Howard Winant, I agree that race is a social fact.³⁰ Without the contributions of critical race theory and the theory of racial formation, efforts toward racial justice, particularly on the part of whites, runs the risk of perpetuating white supremacy.

In my own experience, the Compassion Practice and education about race and racism have provided the tools and skills for me to create the space to see myself racially without becoming enmeshed in the constellation of reactivities sometimes referred to as white fragility.³¹ They have helped me to compassionately understand myself as a racialized person. Moreover, they have helped me contextualize my racial self-understanding within the other aspects of my identity. I am racially white, but that is not the totality of who I am and much of that identity is beyond my choosing. However, this awareness does not obviate me of responsibility. Indeed, the Compassion Practice and critical race and racial formation theories have helped me begin *taking* responsibility for my whiteness. They have helped me create a growing embodied awareness of the material, psychological, cultural, social, and religious benefits of whiteness. In turn, I have been able to more deeply understand and tend to the suffering whiteness causes others to endure. At the same time, the Compassion Practice has helped me understand how it feels to be white and become aware of the interior movements that are activated within me around whiteness. From this non-reactive, non-judgmental ground of compassion I can more deeply understand those interior movements and compassionately embrace them. A structural understanding of race and racism teaches that whiteness hurts others. An embodied compassionate understanding adds

²⁹ Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism," 470.

³⁰ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 137.

³¹ Robin Diangelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011): 54–70.

to this that *my* whiteness hurts others and that I can take compassionate action to resist and transform this reality for racial justice. For example, in a conversation about racism, instead of responding reactively, I have a set of tools that allow me to tend to myself and remain present so that I can authentically and genuinely listen to what the other person is saying without filtering it through my own agenda. Relationally, the Compassion Practice provides the tools to hear the hard truths unmasked by critical race and racial formation theories and to take responsibility for racist actions, conscious and unconscious, on my part. It may take time to absorb those truths, but compassion allows me to face them without employing the psychological property rights of whiteness to dismiss or avoid them.³²

The Compassion Practice honors the courage it takes to engage difficult conversations about race. It provides a way for people to be fully present and grounded to what they are experiencing internally and to remain a compassionate presence for others who may be sharing difficult or vulnerable experiences. Critical race and racial formation theories offer important insights into the changing nature of race and racism. These theories contextualize race and racism within the history of the United States and are continually unearthing the nuances of how racism is perpetuated. It is the combination of compassion with transformative education about race and racism offered by CRT and racial formation theory that create a liberative practice of spiritual freedom and transformation.³³

³² Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed The Movement*, eds. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (New York: New Press, 1995), 276–91. I am intentionally drawing attention to Cheryl Harris' brilliant illumination of whiteness as a form of property. Specifically, I want to highlight the property right to use and enjoyment. "Whiteness is 'used and enjoyed' whenever a person takes advantage of the privileges accorded white people simply by virtue of their whiteness" (282).

³³ While we have come to realize this in the creation of ERAST, I am indebted to Rhonda V. Magee for the depth, and much of the nuance of this reality. Her program, The Way of ColorInsight, and valuable contributions will be discussed in chapter 3. Rhonda V. Magee, "The Way of ColorInsight: Understanding Race and Law Effectively Through Mindfulness-Based ColorInsight Practices," [=University of San Francisco Law Research

Importance of Narrative and First-Person Epistemology

Part of my methodology involves stories. Personal experience is an important form of epistemology. It is often discredited in academia because of the legacy of enlightenment thinking that privileges objectivity as an ideological and practical goal. Yet, objectivity is primarily the universalization of the experiences of Eurocentric, affluent white males -- a reality that quickly materializes when utilizing an epistemology that seriously considers first-person experience. That is, objectivity is de-centered and deeper learning occurs when our experiences are considered a valuable source of information and given the same attention and importance afforded traditional epistemologies. Therefore, my experiences will be included throughout my dissertation to reveal my journey, subjectivity, and embeddedness in the material and process. In addition, as we expect people to engage fully in our process, it is important to demonstrate that I am no exception to that expectation. Thus, I will share stories of my own racial awakening, growing understanding of my racialization, and failings in this process. These stories help foster trust and humility, which are foundational for compassionately engaged anti-racism.

I am a heterosexual, cis-gendered, disabled-ish³⁴ male, and I identify racially as white. That is, I have been racialized as white by sociological forces beyond my control. Whiteness is a meaningful, though not always pleasant, part of my identity that significantly shapes my conscious and subconscious perception of reality. Understanding and owning my white

Paper no. 2015-19] *Georgetown Law Journal of Modern Critical Race Perspectives* (January 2016): 52, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2638511>.

³⁴ I use the term disabled-ish to denote my location within ableness. I live with ADHD which impairs certain areas of my life. However, I am growing more aware of the various forms of disabilities and want to claim this identity without becoming over zealous or dismissing others' location on the spectrum. This is a growing area for me and I think it better to awkwardly include it, rather than leave out a meaningful aspect of my identity.

racialization is crucial for me to authentically and compassionately engage liberative actions for social transformation.

When I began graduate school, I did not expect or even intend to end up writing a dissertation focused largely on issues of race and racism. My primary area of study is spiritual formation and contemplative practices. Yet it is the intermingling of these two disciplines, spiritual formation and critical race theory (CRT), that has created for me a spiritual path to transformation, racial awareness, healing, and wholeness in the world. This path began with interracial friendship.

My close friend and colleague, Reverend Dr. Christopher R. Carter, started me on this path of deep racial awareness. Our friendship has always been defined by sharing and listening to one another. With him, I could ask questions about race that I was afraid to ask in a classroom setting. Because of our shared commitment to being friends, I knew he understood my deep desire to learn how race affects his life. Even if the vocabulary of my questions revealed deep and unconscious attitudes about race that reflected my white privilege, he would kindly answer my question and point out some of the deeper issues within the question as well. He was committed to helping me grow racially. For my part, I was committed to becoming more aware of my own internalized racism and racialization. When he would raise a difficult concept for me to take in, I would listen. I would assume the validity and truth of his experience, and sought to understand how it applied to his life and the insight it brought to my own racialization.

My interest in race, in my mind, was completely unrelated to my graduate studies. I wanted to understand race and racism for my own wellbeing. It never occurred to me that I could pursue this interest in my graduate work. That shift happened during a conversation with Chris when we were talking about race and he said, “Seth, you think about race more than any other

white person I know.” For me, this was an epiphany! Chris had brought awareness to a recurring theme in my life. From my education in spiritual formation, I understood that recurring themes often represent a potential calling. Some part of me was yearning for wholeness around issues of race and racism. As a result of studying CRT in earnest and my personal spiritual practice, I have been able to reflect on my own life experiences and see unheard whispers of calling to a deeper understanding of race throughout my life. This dissertation grew out of our interracial friendship and commitment to spiritual formation. The intermingling of our friendship with my graduate studies in spirituality ultimately led to the development of the program that is the focus of this dissertation.

I refer to Chris often throughout the following pages. His impact and touch on this dissertation are substantial. Indeed, ERAST would not exist without our friendship. In many ways he could have co-authored my dissertation. I use his first name to indicate the familiarity and friendship that we share. I also frequently use the first plural when discussing ERAST. This is an intentional way of indicating his influence and the fundamentally collaborative and interracial approach we have developed.

Overview of Chapters

While constructing and refining our program, we realized the need to formally study the practical application of ERAST and evaluate its effectiveness. This dissertation provides the theoretical foundations of ERAST, how we synthesize those foundations to form our program, and the qualitative study I conducted with a group of undergraduate students evaluating its effectiveness. First, I describe the two major foundations upon which ERAST is constructed; critical race theory (chapter two) and the Compassion Practice (chapter three). Having established ERAST’s foundations, chapter four explains how we synthesize them into the

program. Second, we conducted an evaluative study of our program. Chapters five and six are dedicated to the qualitative approach and analysis we employed, as well as a discussion of my observations and reflections.

Chapter two focuses on critical race theory (CRT), its origins, major themes, and contributions to the complex web of social relations, structures, practices and ideologies we call race. The theory of racial formation is a core theoretical framework to many critical race theorists. I have, accordingly, included it as part of the discussion about CRT. I provide a brief summation of the dominant status quo ideologies relevant to understanding CRT. Then I present a brief overview of critical legal studies (CLS) and the important concepts critiqued and adopted by CRT theorists. Finally, I discuss the core themes of CRT, paying attention to themes relevant for developing ERAST.

Chapter three lays the compassionate foundation for ERAST. It focuses on the need for compassion and its benefits. I devote considerable attention to the Compassion Practice as it is the primary approach to compassion formation we used to develop ERAST. I begin by sharing how compassion became a way of life for me. Then, I describe why compassion is needed, and some of its benefits through sharing a personal story of how compassion saved my life. I follow this with a description of the Compassion Practice and analysis of the theory behind it. This is followed by a comparative analysis that places the Compassion Practice in conversation with other compassion formation programs. The Way of ColorInsight is of particular interest as it uniquely and powerfully synthesizes CRT with compassion-based contemplative practices.³⁵ The chapter concludes by addressing common critiques of compassion.

Chapter four focuses on our program, Embodying Racial Formation for Social Transformation. I begin by sharing how compassion and race have become intertwined in my life.

³⁵ Magee, "ColorInsight," 1-51.

This is followed with a description of how we synthesize the Compassion Practice, critical race theory, and racial formation theory into our program. Finally, I describe the general flow of the program we used during the study. Overall, the goal of chapter four is to provide a conceptual understanding of ERAST and to give the reader an idea of how we implemented the program and the curriculum we used.

Chapter five focuses on the case study of ERAST with a population of undergraduate students. I describe the purpose of the study, provide a rationale for the qualitative methodology I employed, describe the study procedures and coding process, and present my observations and reflections of the data. I use the terms observations and reflections, rather than results, to indicate the constructive and interpretive nature of my findings.

Chapter six continues analysis of participant data focusing on what participants found useful and what they did not. I address both participants' recommendations for improving future programs and our own desired modifications. I also offer suggestions for how to implement some of these recommendations in future programs.

Originality and Contributions

A burgeoning area of academic research on issues of race and racism is the connection between racialized social structures and the lives of individuals. Race has been shown to be more than just ideological. It is also structural.³⁶ These structures have tangible effects on how people live their lives and are deeply and painfully felt by people at the bottom.³⁷ What is poorly understood are the nuances of how these structures are perpetuated within our bodies (physically,

³⁶ Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism," 465-480.

³⁷ Mari Matsuda, "Looking to the Bottom: Critical Legal Studies and Reparations," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed The Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (New York: New Press, 1995), 63-79.

mentally, emotionally, etc.), and how they racially structure our sense of reality. This dissertation provides a program of racial embodiment that compassionately seeks to create awareness about these processes with the goals of engaging compassionate action and increasing the possibility for deeper conversations, self-understanding, and interracial relationships. My dissertation contributes to a small, but growing, group of scholar/practitioners engaged in compassion based contemplative racial justice work.

Chapter 2

Critical Race and Racial Formation Theories:

Laying the Racial Foundation of ERAST

Introduction

This chapter begins laying the foundation for our program. It focuses on critical race theory (CRT), its origins, major themes, and contributions to the complex web of social relations, structures, practices and ideologies we call race. In the first section I present a selected summation of the dominant status quo ideologies relevant to understanding CRT themes. In the second section, I present a brief overview of critical legal studies (CLS), and the important concepts adopted by CRT. In addition, I include the controversies that led CLS scholars of color to create CRT. In the third section, I provide the core themes of CRT. Overall it should be noted that my presentation of CRT is not meant to be comprehensive. Rather, I have presented my understanding of the core themes with a view toward their importance for developing ERAST.

In order to understand the complex body of work known as critical race theory (CRT) it is important to understand where it came from and why it came about. Simply put, it is important to contextualize the movement. CRT grew out of the critical legal studies (CLS) movement, and both are subversive efforts to construct alternative views of legal theory. CRT and CLS began as reactions against the dominant views of legal formalism, liberalism, neo-liberalism, and colorblind views of race. In general, these dominant mainstream ideologies intimately involve core values of the enlightenment project, and can be seen as an extension of it. Particularly the lauded and problematic values of merit, objectivity, rationalism, and neutrality.

In this section I will provide a brief summation of these dominant ideologies, and briefly mention CLS and CRT counterpoints. A complete presentation of mainstream legal theory and colorblind racial ideology are beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore, I will present the relevant points necessary to understand CRT.

Much of the following discussion involves the critiques that CLS and CRT scholars have constructed to subvert major tenets of liberalism. It will be helpful, therefore, to provide a basic definition of liberalism relevant to their critiques. Liberalism, in this context, emphasizes an incremental approach to legal and social transformation, a colorblind view of race, an emphasis on meritocracy, and equal opportunity. Another major tenet is that constitutional protections adhere in the individual, not groups.¹

Legal liberalism is the idea that the higher law system of Constitutionalism and its processes can effectively constrain the exercise of rights and responsibilities permitted by the powerful under a Constitution-based liberalism.² It is undergirded by a formalistic view of the law. Derrick Bell provides the following prominent formalist assumptions, “the law is instrumental, self-evidently logical, and derived from transcendent or ultimate principles.”³ In addition, law is rational, apolitical, neutral, and objective. In this view, law and politics are separate. Great faith, Kimberle Crenshaw observes, is placed in “the gradual reform of American law through the victory of superior rationality of progressive ideas-which rests on assumptions

¹ Cheryl I. Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 287.

² Having waded outside my field of expertise in writing this chapter, I would like to thank Rhonda V. Magee for her guidance and wisdom in its formulation. Any inconsistencies or inaccuracies are my own and not hers. Here, I am grateful for her help with the concise formulation of legal liberalism. A term whose conception is contestable and varied.

³ Derrick A. Bell Jr, “Racial Realism,” in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 303.

that legal institutions employ a rational, apolitical, and neutral discourse with which to mediate the exercise of social power.”⁴

The “colorblind” view of race that emerged from liberalism’s constellation of enlightenment principles dominates current understandings of race and racism in the United States.⁵ At its core, a colorblind view of race understands racism as an irrational prejudice based on an individual pathology. It is neither connected to larger systemic and structural issues and forces, nor is it seen as being connected to centuries of racist practices and ideologies. It has severed the past from its reckoning of current realities. Michael Omi and Howard Winant point out how:

“Those advocating a colorblind view of race assert that the goals of the civil rights movement have been substantially achieved, that overt forms of racial discrimination are a thing of the past, and that the United States is in the midst of a successful transition to a ‘post-racial’ society. In this view, any hints of race consciousness are tainted by racism. Thus, the most effective anti-racist gesture, policy, or practice is simply to ignore race.”⁶

In a colorblind view of race, even talking about race is seen as an act of racism. With the dawn of the age of Trump there has been a resurgence of overt racism, and white nationalism. While this has precipitated a shift in racial tensions in the United States, the prominence of colorblind racism has not diminished.

Though considerably more can be said, these are the major contours of legal liberalism and a colorblind view of race and racism. It is these major contours, and many others, which CRT scholars and activists want to create awareness of, subvert, and transform. Kimberle Crenshaw underscores the importance of such efforts. “The current Court’s appeal to color-

⁴Kimberlé Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed The Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (New York: New Press, 1995), xviii.

⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 256.

⁶ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 257.

blindness is part of an ideological strategy that obscures its active role in sustaining hierarchies of power.”⁷ With this briefest of introductions to the status quo, I now turn to CLS and then to the emergence of CRT; both movements that seek to subvert the status quo.

Origins

Critical Legal Studies

Critical race theory emerged out of the field of critical legal studies in the 1980s. CRT theorists draw on several tenants of CLS, and in order to understand CRT it is important to know a bit about CLS and its emphases. I have laid out the themes of CLS and CRT in the way that makes most sense to me. It is no simple task. Indeed, a major concern in CLS and CRT is drawing attention to the problems with the process of categorizing and the inherent power dynamics and oppression that result from it. It is no surprise that scholars of these disciplines write in ways that resist categorization and systematization.

What is CLS and its focus?

Critical legal studies (CLS) is a left oriented movement that seeks to deconstruct traditional legal scholarship through various methodologies. Kimberle Crenshaw explains that:

“CLS scholars have attempted to analyze legal ideology and discourse as social artifacts that operate to recreate and legitimate American society. In order to discover the contingent character of the law, CLS scholars unpack legal doctrine to reveal both its internal and external inconsistencies. CLS scholars then examine the political character of the choices that were made in the doctrine's name. This inquiry exposes the ways in which legal ideology has helped to create, support, and legitimate America's present class structure.”⁸

⁷ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xviii.

⁸ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law," in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 108.

CLS asserts that our legal system is set up to perpetuate and justify the existing arrangement of our society. CLS scholars have revealed the means by which our legal system perpetuates this state of affairs. This effort runs contrary to legal formalism and liberalism, both mainstays of traditional legal scholarship.

One of the ways CLS scholars reveal the internal inconsistencies of legal doctrine is by adopting an oppositional stance to the principle of coherency – the view that law can produce determinate results free from reference to value, politics, or historical conditions.⁹ Logically, this stance is called incoherency, and is the expression of extreme skepticism toward coherency. It is important to note that no CLS scholar suggests pure incoherency. The main tactic used to expose standard liberal legalisms as incoherent is called "trashing," which emphasizes the indeterminate elements of law.¹⁰

For example, Anthony E. Cook describes what trashing reveals about a liberal conception of community. "A careful 'trashing' of legal doctrine reveals that all things are infused with both public and private qualities (the distinctions needed to reify and maintain a liberal illusion of community), there no longer exists any supposed objective criterion by which to logically characterize all things as either public or private. The dichotomy then collapses and with it the artificial forms of community."¹¹

To show the contingent character of law through revealing its external inconsistencies CLS scholars expose the paradoxical and political worldviews embedded within legal doctrine.¹²

⁹ Mari Matsuda, "Looking to the Bottom: Critical Legal Studies and Reparations," in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 64.

¹⁰ Matsuda, "Looking," 64.

¹¹ Anthony E. Cook, "Beyond Critical Legal Studies: The Reconstructive Theology of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.," in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 85–102.

¹² Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Race, Reform, and Retrenchment," 108.

Central tenets of CLS in these efforts are that law is neither apolitical, neutral, nor determinate.¹³ Law and legal discourse does not merely reflect outside (usually class) interests but is itself a site for the production of ideology and the perpetuation of social power.¹⁴ Power is not 'out there' but resides in the institutions and relationships that shape our lives.¹⁵

An important phenomenon that CLS scholars want to understand is why people acquiesce in the social systems that oppress them. They seek to learn “how the backdrop values find their way into mass consciousness as conventional wisdom, thereby limiting the range of acceptable, or even conceivable, social arrangements.”¹⁶ Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony has proven invaluable in the way of answering this question. He articulated the concept of hegemony as “the means by which a system of attitudes and beliefs, permeating both popular consciousness and the ideology of elites, reinforces existing social arrangements and convinces the dominated classes that the existing order is inevitable.”¹⁷

Hegemony, therefore, is one of the primary ways that the legal system perpetuates the status quo. Kimberle Crenshaw explains in more detail. “The concept of hegemony allows some CLS scholars to explain the continued legitimacy of American society by revealing how legal consciousness induces people to accept or consent to their own oppression.”¹⁸ Crenshaw continues, citing Robert Gordon as an example of a CLS scholar employing the concept of hegemony. “The most effective kind of domination takes place when both the dominant and

¹³ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xxii.

¹⁴ Crenshaw, xxiv.

¹⁵ Crenshaw, xxiii.

¹⁶ Cook, “Beyond Critical Legal Studies,” 85.

¹⁷ Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment,” 108.

¹⁸ Crenshaw, 108.

dominated classes believe that the existing order, with perhaps some marginal changes, is satisfactory, or at least represents the most that anyone could expect, because things pretty much have to be the way they are.”¹⁹ Crenshaw goes on to point out how law is a central feature in the illusion of necessity:

“Although society's structures of thought have been constructed by elites, people reify these structures and clothe them with the illusion of necessity. Law is an essential feature of this illusion because it embodies and reinforces ideological assumptions about human relations which people accept as natural or even immutable. People act out their lives, mediate conflicts, and even perceive themselves with reference to the law. By accepting the bounds of law and ordering their lives according to its categories and relations, people think that they are confirming reality. By accepting the worldview implicit in the law, people are bound by its conceptual limitations.”²⁰

Working implicitly within this framework people do not question its hegemonic function or see other possibilities beyond it.

Points of departure/disagreement

In the midst of weighty discussions at CLS conferences, scholars of color grew concerned that the CLS critique of traditional legal doctrine failed to recognize the irreducible racial dynamics within both traditional legal doctrine and the critiques of CLS scholars themselves.²¹ As I move into the points of departure between CLS and CRT it is important to note that CRT theorists have taken much inspiration and insight from CLS, and that “most critical race theorists acknowledge a close connection with CLS.”²²

¹⁹ Robert Gordon, “New Developments in Legal Theory,” in *The Politics of Law: A Progressive Critique*, ed. David Kairys (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982): 286; quoted in Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment,” 108.

²⁰ Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment,” 108.

²¹ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xxiii.

²² Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Critical Race Theory and Critical Legal Studies: Contestation and Coalition,” in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 60.

There are a number of points of disagreement between CLS and CRT. For example, Anthony E. Cook points out that the CLS movement has failed “to acquaint itself with the history and perspective of those who have, in different contexts, endured the problems of most concern to CLS – problems associated with hierarchy, powerlessness, and legitimating ideologies.”²³ In short, CLS has denied the lived experiences of people of color. Harlon L. Dalton adds that scholars of color experienced a sense of being silenced at CLS conferences by white scholars. Referencing a personal conversation Harlon notes, “as John Powell put it, ‘I feel spoken for and I feel spoken about, but rarely do I feel spoken to...’”²⁴

An example of CLS's underdeveloped critique of racial power was the 1986 CLS conference.²⁵ Scholars of color were asked to facilitate discussions about race. They chose to utilize a central tenet of CLS, that power is not 'out there' but resides in the institutions and relationships that shape our lives. Their workshop was designed to uncover and discuss dimensions of racial power manifested within CLS. Their question "What is it about the whiteness of CLS that discourages participation by POC?" created a heated exchange and drew a defensive response. White CLS scholars were resistant to bringing its own critiques home, to look at itself through its own lens.²⁶

There are two crucial theoretical divides that emerged between CRT theorists and CLS scholars. These are the failure or refusal of CLS to develop a practically-oriented program, and CLS scholars' dismissive critique of civil rights discourse. Dalton offers insight on the importance of developing a practical focus:

²³ Cook, “Beyond Critical Legal Studies,” 85.

²⁴ Harlon L. Dalton, “The Clouded Prism: Minority Critique of the Critical Legal Studies Movement,” in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 81.

²⁵ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xxiii.

²⁶ Crenshaw, xxiii.

“No matter how smart or bookish we were, we could not retreat from the sights, sounds, and smells of the communities from which we came...And from the beginning we learned, not as an article of political faith but rather as a simple fact of life, that our fate and that of all persons of similar hue were inseparably intertwined. That fundamental connectedness, together with our distinctive subcultures, nourished and sustained us, created in us an unshakable sense of community.”²⁷

The lack of CLS to develop a practical constructive program constituted a denial of the experiences, insights, and wisdom of people of color. As Mari Matsuda points out, “the imagination of the academic philosopher cannot recreate the experience of life on the bottom.”²⁸ Scholars of color recognized the wisdom and insight of people in these contexts was crucial in the development of CRT. Matsuda employs Antonio Gramsci’s concept of the ‘organic intellectual,’ grassroots philosophers who are uniquely able to relate theory to the concrete experience of oppression, to emphasize the importance of these contexts of oppression and marginality. Furthermore, the need for material transformation in these contexts cannot be overstated. A merely intellectual focus does not put food on the table.

Another failure of CLS to incorporate the lived experiences of people of color is the CLS critique of rights.²⁹ CLS scholars largely saw rights as indeterminate and as perpetuating the status quo. CRT theorists agreed with the indeterminacy critique, but understood the value of subordinated people exercising rights for their own empowerment. Kimberle Crenshaw shows that CLS scholars’ failure to address racism lead “to an inability to appreciate fully the transformative significance of the civil rights movement in mobilizing black Americans...”³⁰ Rights discourse held a social and transformative value in the context of racial subordination that

²⁷ Dalton, “The Clouded Prism,” 80.

²⁸ Matsuda, “Looking,” 63.

²⁹ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xxiii.

³⁰ Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment,” 110.

was more important than the question of whether reliance on rights could bring about determinate results.³¹ This emphasis on rights was important for African Americans to be able to re-imagine themselves as full rights-bearing citizens within the American political imagination. CRT theorists wanted to acknowledge the centrality of rights discourse while also acknowledging the risks involved with using rights language.

Crenshaw also asserts that the failure to consider the reality of those most oppressed by American institutions causes CLS scholars to overlook the ideological role of racism itself.³² The favored tactic of trashing legal doctrine, Crenshaw explains, is undergirded by an assumption of domination by consent. For Crenshaw, this is an unrealistic view of racial domination. “Coercion explains much more about racial domination than does ideologically induced consent. Black people do not create their oppressive worlds moment to moment. They are coerced into living in worlds created and maintained by others...the ideological source of this coercion is not liberal legal consciousness but racism.”³³

Points of Inspiration

In addition to the above concerns, CRT theorists have employed much of the heart of CLS in the construction of their racial critique. Gloria Ladson-Billings emphasizes “the main contribution of CLS is to its analysis of legitimating structures in our society.”³⁴ Mari Matsuda notes that “CLS’s central message that legal ideals are manipulable, and that law serves to

³¹ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xxiii.

³² Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment,” 110.

³³ Crenshaw, 110.

³⁴ Gloria Ladson-Billings, “Just What Is Critical Race Theory and What’s It Doing in a Nice Field like Education?,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 1 (1998): 10, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863>.

legitimate existing maldistributions of wealth and power is attractive to minority scholars because it rings true for anyone who has experienced life in nonwhite America.”³⁵

She explains further that an elevated understanding of traditional legal concepts and neutral principles and rights helps protect victims of oppression from the seductive trap of unsophisticated rights-thinking. She affirms the importance of and need for a reciprocal relationship between the practical wisdom and insight of ‘organic intellectuals’ and the detailed intellectual legal knowledge of CLS scholars.³⁶

I find Matsuda’s reference to Erlene Stetson’s work particularly resonant and insightful. She observes that Stetson’s view of African American female poets is analogous to the task of critical theorists. Stetson states:

“These poets have brought to their quest a perception of reality that is subconscious and subversive. It is a perception arising out of their disenchantment with the emptiness of American life. It recognizes that the appearance is not reality, but only a partial and ineffective semblance of reality. And finally it is a perception of reality as unified and dialectic rather than fragmented and disjunctive. Subterfuge and ambivalence arise as active strategies for living and for creating art where more direct means for survival and self-expression have been denied...”³⁷

Major Themes in Critical Race Theory

In this section I focus on major themes within CRT, paying particular attention to those that are most helpful for developing our process. There are two shared interests of CRT theorists according to Kimberle Crenshaw. The first is to “understand how a regime of white supremacy and its subordination of people of color have been created and maintained in America.”³⁸ The second, is a “desire to *change* the vexed bond between law and racial power.”³⁹

³⁵ Matsuda, “Looking,” 64.

³⁶ Matsuda, 63.

³⁷ Erlene Stetson, ed., *Black Sister: Poetry by Black American Women 1746-1980*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1981): xvii; quoted in Matsuda, “Looking,” 77n16.

Beyond these shared interests there is no methodological or tactical consensus amongst CRT theorists. However, common themes frequently emerge in their writings. I have identified nine that I will discuss here. (1) Centering experiences of people of color, (2) Emphasis on narrative, (3) Racism is structural, (4) Revisionist history (it's a good thing), (5) Critique of liberalism, (6) Racial formation, (7) Race is a social fact, (8) Racism is normal, not aberrational, (9) Intersectionality.

Above all, Kimberle Crenshaw emphasizes "CRT is helpful because it uncovers the ongoing dynamics of racialized power, and its embeddedness in practices and values which seemingly do not have racial manifestations."⁴⁰ The uniting principle of all CRT theorists is a shared commitment to human liberation.

(1) Centering experiences of POC; (2) Emphasis on narrative storytelling

Gloria Ladson Billings beautifully summarizes the importance of centering the experiences of people of color for CRT. "CRTists integrate their experiential knowledge, drawn from shared history as 'other' with their ongoing struggles to transform a world deteriorating under the albatross of racial hegemony."⁴¹ Mari Matsuda explains why the emphasis on experience as an epistemological source is needed. "The imagination of the academic philosopher cannot recreate the experience of life on the bottom. We must look to grassroots philosophers...who are uniquely able to relate theory to the concrete experience of oppression."⁴²

³⁸ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xiii.

³⁹ Crenshaw, xiii.

⁴⁰ Crenshaw, xxix.

⁴¹ Ladson-Billings, "What Is Critical Race Theory," 11.

⁴² Matsuda, "Looking," 63-64.

It is common for CRT theorists to center their experience through storytelling and contextualization.⁴³ Again Matsuda points out the insight and naming possibilities of contextualizing. “When notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, are examined not from an abstract position but from the position of groups who have suffered through history, moral relativism recedes, and identifiable normative priorities emerge.”⁴⁴ The importance of the wisdom and insights of people inhabiting marginalized identities cannot be overstated.

Richard Delgado asserts that “critical writers use counterstories to challenge, displace, or mock pernicious narratives and beliefs.”⁴⁵ He goes on to point out that stories can help give voice to victims of racial discrimination and reveal that others have similar experiences. For Delgado, “powerfully written stories and narratives may begin a process of correction in our system of beliefs and categories by calling attention to neglected evidence and reminding readers of our common humanity.”⁴⁶ Gloria Ladson-Billings explains that “stories provide the necessary context for understanding, feeling, and interpreting,”⁴⁷ and that traditional forms of legalism emphasizing universality and a decontextualized orientation render voices of the marginalized mute. Stories also provide a culturally contextual way of naming one’s own reality, which is undergirded by the CRT assumption that intellectual work is always situated, reflective to varying degrees of the cultural, historical, and institutional conditions of its production.⁴⁸

⁴³ Magee, “ColorInsight,” 7-9. Magee reflects on her own experience in law school to illustrate how students are indoctrinated into a colorblind view of race, and to underscore the importance of including compassion and contemplation in education about race and CRT.

⁴⁴ Matsuda, “Looking,” 63.

⁴⁵ Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 49.

⁴⁶ Delgado and Stefancic, 49-50.

⁴⁷ Ladson-Billings, “What Is Critical Race Theory,” 13.

⁴⁸ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xxvii.

Storytelling conveying the experiences of people of color is an important and indispensable contribution to understanding the complex nature of race and racism.

(3) Racism is structural

As noted above, CLS scholars failed to realize the structural nature of racism. Their reductionistic explanation of racial phenomena did not view race as an organizing principle of social relations. Michael Omi and Howard Winant observe the centrality of race as a social structure. “Race can never be merely a concept or idea, a representation or signification alone. Indeed, race cannot be discussed, cannot even be noticed, without reference to social structure.”⁴⁹

What does it mean to say that race and racism are structural? In my journey to understand race and racism, this was one of the more difficult concepts to wrap my head around. In part, precisely because of the structural nature of racism. I am a white male. So, for me most of the structural aspects of race are invisible because the racialized social system in the United States functions to put me at the top of the racial hierarchy. For example, there are very few places, especially public places, where my presence needs justification. My experience of “the-way-the-world-is” does not involve a requisite need to prove the validity of my presence. When I show up, it is assumed that I am moral, good, honest, and not going to cause trouble. This is not true for many people of color. Thus, my experience of being in public places reflects my white (and male) identity within a racialized social system, rather than a universal experience common to all people navigating public spaces.

⁴⁹ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 125.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has offered an influential view of racism as structural.⁵⁰ Counter to contemporary colorblind and heavily ideological views of race and racism, Bonilla-Silva's powerful structural theory yields much explanatory insight. He employs Whitmeyer's (1994) understanding of structural as "the networks of (interactional) relationships among actors as well as the distributions of socially meaningful characteristics of actors and aggregates of actors."⁵¹ By this he means the organizing principles on which sets of social relations are systematically patterned. In the example above, the normativity and supremacy given to whiteness (and maleness) are two such organizing principles.

Bonilla-Silva proposes the general concept of racialized social systems as the starting point for his alternative framework. Racialized social systems "refers to societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races."⁵² Crucially, he emphasizes that the placement of people into racial categories involves a power hierarchy that produces definite social relations between the races. Those at the top receive a vast array of systematic rewards. "The totality of these racialized social relations and practices constitutes the racial structure of a society."⁵³ My experience of near universal acceptance in public spaces is one example of a systematic reward I receive as a result of being white in a racialized social structure that privileges whiteness. Bonilla-Silva points out that contemporary racial practices reproducing racial inequality (1) are increasingly covert, (2) are embedded in normal operations of institutions, (3) avoid direct racial

⁵⁰ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation," *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 3 (1997): 465-480.

⁵¹ Bonilla-Silva, 469n5.

⁵² Bonilla-Silva, 469.

⁵³ Bonilla-Silva, 470.

terminology, (4) are invisible to most Whites.⁵⁴ A structural view of race and racism reveals the vital need for theories, methodologies, and practices that unmask, name, subvert, and transform these increasingly covert practices of white supremacy.

(4) Revisionist history

How do we understand who we are, and where we come from? History is a constructive and value-laden process. This is a perspective that CRT scholars understand well. They reconstruct history in order to show that racism is part of the foundation and functioning of this country. A major component of this constructive process involves reinterpreting history through the eyes of the oppressed, in many cases their own family histories, to make sense of their experience. As Omi and Winant observe:

There has been a racial system in North America since the earliest days of contact with and conquest by Europeans. This system has linked political rule to the racial classification of individuals and groups. The major institutions and social relationships of U.S. society – law, political organization, economic relationships, religions, cultural life, residential patterns – have been structured from the beginning by this [racialized] system.⁵⁵

They also emphasize the crucial point that all this is still going on today. “The racism of the past is still active in the present.”⁵⁶ This is disturbingly evident in the election of Trump to the presidency, and the Neo-Nazi rally in Charlottesville.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Bonilla-Silva, 476.

⁵⁵ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 141.

⁵⁶ Omi and Winant, 249.

⁵⁷ While they are frequently referred to as the Alt-Right, I use the term Neo-Nazi. Their own ideology and published work is consistent with Nazi ideology. To shy away from their own view of themselves legitimates Neo-Nazi rhetoric as reasonable.

The period of civil rights is of major interest to CRT scholars. The civil rights movement created significant gains for African Americans.⁵⁸ Legal reforms and formal extension of citizenship were made possible by “the removal of most formal barriers and symbolic manifestations of subordination.”⁵⁹ However, the implementation of formal equality under the law was unevenly distributed, and those suffering a lasting material disadvantage found little respite. The structural racism whose effects are seen in the economic, political, and social lives of African Americans remained in place despite the move to “racially neutral” laws. Crenshaw goes on to point out that a crucial force in legitimating the deteriorating day to day conditions of most African Americans is white race-consciousness.⁶⁰ Particularly, the subconscious white norm within popular culture.

Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing through the present race went through a process of rearticulation and invisibilization. Largely as a result of conservative backlash against the gains of the civil rights movement. Racism went underground. This complex and loosely organized process culminated in the culturally dominant view today of colorblind racism.⁶¹

Crenshaw points out, as a result of the conservative backlash current colorblind and neoconservative approaches to race have severed the “historical connection between past racial subordination and the present situation... by the formal repudiation of the old race-conscious policies.”⁶² Importantly, she explains that creating this break with the past allows neoconservatives to claim that present inequities are not the result of discriminatory practices

⁵⁸ Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment,” 115.

⁵⁹ Crenshaw, 115.

⁶⁰ Crenshaw, 115.

⁶¹ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 161-210.

⁶² Crenshaw, “Race, Reform, and Retrenchment,” 115.

because our society no longer discriminates against blacks.⁶³ The willful ignorance needed to generate such claims emphasizes the need for more accurate reconstructive historical narratives that reveal the continuity and inherent instability of oppressive systems through time.

(5) Critique of liberalism (objectivity, neutrality, meritocracy)

This is a major focus of CLS that was adopted by CRT theorists. I have already covered the way in which CLS scholars critique liberalism. CRT theorists additionally draw out the unconscious embedded racial dynamics within liberalism and a traditional legal framework.

CRT theorists also employ the CLS critique against liberalism, particularly the principles of objectivity, meritocracy, and neutrality found in traditional legal scholarship. Kimberle Crenshaw observes “there is no place outside the social dynamics of racial power from which to merely observe and analyze.”⁶⁴ We are embedded within the racial hierarchy of the United States. Crenshaw also provides the following critiques of neutrality, and merit as examples of legal liberalism’s failings:

What liberalism views as ‘neutrality’ is actually a mechanism for perpetuating the distribution of rights, privileges, and opportunity established under a regime of uncontested white supremacy. Merit, as well, functions not as a neutral basis for distributing resources and opportunity, but rather as a repository of hidden, race-specific preferences for those who have the power to determine the meaning and consequences of ‘merit’.⁶⁵

CRT theorists also affirm the importance of critiquing the liberal perspective of civil rights as a long, slow, but always upward pull. Liberalism is a flawed view that “does not account for the limits of current legal paradigms to serve as catalysts for social change, and its

⁶³ Crenshaw, 107.

⁶⁴ Crenshaw, introduction to *Critical Race Theory*, xxiii.

⁶⁵ Crenshaw, xix.

emphasis on incrementalism...has no mechanism for sweeping changes which are required to address racism.”⁶⁶

(6) Racial formation

The theory of racial formation is a theoretical framework, developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, that provides an illuminating view of the sociohistorical process of racial identity.⁶⁷ They define racial formation as “the sociohistorical process by which racial identities are created, lived out, transformed, and destroyed.”⁶⁸ This complex process involves the core concepts of racialization, and the creation of racial projects to which we are all subjected.

Racialization is “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group.”⁶⁹ The core of the racialization process involves imparting social and symbolic meaning to perceived phenotypical differences. Social differentiation is based upon and reinforced by real or imagined human physical characteristics. There is an irreducible visual dimension to the race-concept.⁷⁰ The fact that we can interpret racial meanings is evidence of a preexisting racialized social structure. Omi and Winant emphasize, however, that once specific concepts of race become accepted as a social reality, racial difference is not dependent on visual observation alone. Even the blind see race.⁷¹ A major goal of their concept of racialization is to disrupt and reorganize the rigid framework of essence versus illusion in

⁶⁶ Crenshaw, xix.

⁶⁷ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 103-159.

⁶⁸ Omi and Winant, 109.

⁶⁹ Omi and Winant, 111.

⁷⁰ Omi and Winant, 13.

⁷¹ Osagie Obasogie, *Blinded by Sight: Seeing Race Through the Eyes of the Blind* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); quoted in Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 111.

which race is theorized and debated. Race is not real in a biological (essence) sense, but it is also not an illusion. Its socially constructed nature has very real material and social consequences.

Racial formation, for Omi and Winant, occurs through a linkage between structure and signification. Racial projects are the ideological and practical work horses in this process. They make the links and articulate the connections between structure and signification. “A racial project,” for Omi and Winant, “is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines.”⁷² From the macro to the micro racial projects occur at all levels of society. At the macro-level of racial policy-making, state activity, and collective action, down to the level of everyday experience and personal interaction.⁷³ At whatever level, racial projects reflect and respond to the broader patterning of race in the overall social system. For Omi and Winant, “every racial project attempts to reproduce, extend, subvert, or directly challenge that system.”⁷⁴

The theory of racial formation offers a wealth of insight into the way people are raced. It offers concepts that allow linkages to be drawn from the structural to the personal. Structurally, racial formation provides a way to begin thinking about how we are raced by mostly subconscious social forces larger than ourselves. Personally, racial formation offers insight into how we manifest these larger racialized social forces in our everyday lives. How the processes of racial formation inhabit our psyches and our hearts. For Omi and Winant “racial formation is thus a vast summation of signifying actions and social structures, past and present, that have

⁷² Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 125.

⁷³ Omi and Winant, 125.

⁷⁴ Omi and Winant, 125.

combined and clashed in the creation of the enormous complex of relationships and identities that is labeled race.”⁷⁵

(7) Race is a social fact, (8) racism is normal, not aberrational

Current practices of colorblind race view even the mentioning of race as an act of racism. CRT scholars find this abrogation of race itself a form of racism. One that denies the reality of race as a social fact, somewhat analogous to the social fact of gender and class.⁷⁶ That is to say, race is a socially meaningful concept with real world effects, whose eradication is not foreseeable in the near future. Thus, discourses that deny racial consciousness, or focus on being post-racial serve to legitimate current practices of racial subordination, and white supremacy. These practices are largely invisible to most whites.

Omi and Winant raise the concern with views that want to ‘go beyond race’ or become ‘post racial’ is their view of race as a problem.⁷⁷ They point out that we cannot step outside of race and racism because our society and identities are constituted by them. A more effective starting point, in their view, is to recognize that even with the uncertainties and contradictions, race plays a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world.⁷⁸ They use Foucault's concept of "biopower" to see the normalization and comprehensiveness of race and racism in the modern world.⁷⁹ “With this they challenge the idea that human differentiation according to race is somehow aberrant, and that racism is an irrational deviation from such immutable principles as individualism, or the law of supply and demand. These are ‘scapegoat’

⁷⁵ Omi and Winant, 13.

⁷⁶ Omi and Winant, 137.

⁷⁷ Omi and Winant, 112.

⁷⁸ Omi and Winant, 112.

⁷⁹ Omi and Winant, 144.

theories of race.”⁸⁰ Race is a classification system and is now a permanent part of our social world. It is part of the way meaning is made in the world. It is an element of social structure rather than an irregularity within it.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva highlights the socially invented nature of race while emphasizing that it created enduring forms of human association with definite status differences. Once race acquired the level of social meaning and influence to define groups of people “race [became] a real category of group association and identity.”⁸¹ Far from being aberrational, racial phenomena are a “normal” outcome of the racial structure of a society.⁸² Acts of racism, such as those committed in Ferguson, Baltimore, Charlottesville or anywhere in the United States should be understood as “normal,” rather than the result of an individual with an idiosyncratic, pathological view of race. In short, all of us with racial privilege (i.e. white people) often do commit acts of racism, despite our good intentions. It is crucial to point out that viewing racial phenomena as “normal” in no way speaks to the justness of those phenomena. The “normalcy” of racial phenomena does not make them just. In the words of Gloria Ladson-Billings, “the strategy becomes unmasking and exposing racism in its various permutations.”⁸³

(9) Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality is central to CRT, in my view, and intimately involves issues of identity, categorizing, and othering. We all have complex identities that intersect in a myriad of ways. The nexus of two or more of our identities and the associated power dynamics are the focus of intersectionality. What happens at a particular nexus? How does the intersection

⁸⁰ Omi and Winant, 144.

⁸¹ Bonilla-Silva, “Rethinking Racism,” 472.

⁸² Bonilla-Silva, 475.

⁸³ Ladson-Billings, “What Is Critical Race Theory,” 11.

of our identities affect our everyday experience? The way we see the world? What are the power dynamics between these intersections?

Kimberle Williams Crenshaw developed this concept reflecting on her identity as a woman and African American. From her own lived experience, and the insights of others who share this identity, Crenshaw has shed light on deep-seated and problematic assumptions of feminist and antiracist practices:

Women of color are marginalized within both feminist and antiracist discourses because of their intersectional identity as women *and* of color...Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. Thus, when the practices expound identity as "woman" *or* "person of color" as an either/or proposition, they relegate the identity of women of color to a location that resists telling.⁸⁴

Consequently, women of color cannot feel at home in either setting. Crenshaw offers the concept of intersectionality to emphasize the importance of accounting for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.⁸⁵

Affirming Crenshaw, Omi and Winant emphatically assert the importance of intersectionality for understanding processes of social categorizing. "It is not possible to understand the (il)logic of any form of social stratification, any practice of cultural marginalization, or any type of inequality or human variation, without appreciating the deep, complex, comingling, interpenetration of race, class, gender, and sexuality."⁸⁶ While organizing people into different categories is part of how humans make meaning, the content of those categories changes enormously over time and space. The categorizing process reflects specific

⁸⁴ Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," in Crenshaw et al., *Critical Race Theory*, 357.

⁸⁵ Crenshaw, "Intersectionality," 358.

⁸⁶ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 106.

social structures, cultural meanings and practices, and broad power relations.⁸⁷ An important dimension of the categorizing process for race is the visual dynamic, what Omi and Winant call its ‘ocularity.’ “How one sees oneself and how one is seen by others are both profoundly, and often contradictorily, shaped by notions of race. Race continues to be a fundamental aspect of human identity.”⁸⁸ Even though race is a master category of oppression and resistance in the United States Omi and Winant point out that race did not create class, sex, or gender conflict, and that it is not more central than other aspects of identity in an intersectional framework.

Stephanie Wildman brings an intersectional approach to her critique of privilege and power systems. She explains that “privilege can intersect with subordination or other systems of privilege as well...there is no purely privileged or unprivileged persons.”⁸⁹ Her critique is particularly useful for unmasking privilege and how it intersects with forms of identity. In particular, Wildman points out that privilege is not perceived as something bestowed on us, rather it is experienced as the way things are. This makes privilege invisible to its holder and difficult to notice. For whites who cannot see their white privilege, this allows us to unwittingly perpetuate a white supremacist society. In this sense all whites are racist because we benefit from systemic white privilege.⁹⁰

Wildman’s critique of privilege and its maintenance by distinct but interlocking systems of power offers a wealth of insights for those embodying identities of privilege. Particularly insightful for me is her recognition of the importance of friendships in talking about power systems. She raises the important concern that simply making a friend across categories of

⁸⁷ Omi and Winant, 105.

⁸⁸ Omi and Winant, 246.

⁸⁹ Stephanie M. Wildman, *Privilege Revealed: How Invisible Preference Undermines America* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 21.

⁹⁰ Wildman, 21.

difference does not mean white people have ceased to be racist. Rather, it is important to realize when making friends across categories of difference that working on listening to what is important to your friend needs to be a central dynamic of that friendship.⁹¹

Mainstream liberal discourses, Crenshaw explains, treat identity categories as intrinsically negative. Within this framework social power is seen to exclude or marginalize those who are different. In this way of thinking, the goal is to achieve liberation by emptying identity categories of any social significance. She then uplifts an alternative view within certain feminist and racial liberation movements. “The social power in delineating difference need not be the power of domination; it can instead be the source of social empowerment and reconstruction.”⁹²

For my own work, intersectionality is indispensable for ethically engaging issues of race and racism as a white male. As Gloria Ladson-Billings rightly points out, “when whites are exempted from racial designations and become “families,” “jurors,” “students,” “teachers,” etc. their ability to apply a CRT analytical rubric is limited.”⁹³ For me to justly engage what I believe to be one of the most important issues of my life, I need to spend time “racing” myself. Intersectionality offers me a way to do this that allows me to see myself in multilayered and complex ways. Furthermore, intersectionality provides a way for me to view others as the multilayered and complex people they are.

Conclusion

⁹¹ Wildman, 3-4.

⁹² Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Intersectionality,” 357.

⁹³ Ladson-Billings, “What Is Critical Race Theory,” 11.

In this chapter I have outlined the origins and major themes of CRT, emphasizing the themes relevant to ERAST. To recapitulate, race is a complex social phenomenon structuring our society.⁹⁴ It heavily influences our perception of the world, how we make sense of that world, and how we group information. Most of these processes happen sub-consciously, and predictably occur regardless of our conscious intent. Furthermore, racialized social structures limit the chances for success of those who are at the bottom of the racial hierarchy.⁹⁵ Along with Michael Omi and Howard Winant, I agree that race, like gender, is a social fact.⁹⁶ The contributions of critical race theory and the theory of racial formation for understanding the structural dynamics of race and racism are essential for racial justice efforts. Education about race and racism must include these critical theories if it is to be authentic and transformative. CRT theorists' compelling analysis of the myriad ways that race and racism permeate life in the United States is central to unmasking and subverting the dominant racial hierarchy, and empowering people of color.

⁹⁴ Bonilla-Silva, "Rethinking Racism," 470.

⁹⁵ Bonilla-Silva, 470.

⁹⁶ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 137.

Chapter 3

Cultivating Compassion:

Laying the Compassionate Foundation of ERAST

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the need for compassion and its benefits, such as increasing resilience, promoting interconnectedness, and providing self-care. I devote considerable attention to the Compassion Practice as it is the primary approach to compassion formation we used to develop ERAST. I begin by sharing how compassion has impacted my life. Next, I describe why compassion is needed, and some of the benefits of it. I follow this with a description of the Compassion Practice and analysis of the theory behind it. I then engage a comparative analysis that places the Compassion Practice in conversation with other compassion formation programs. The chapter concludes by raising critiques to compassion drawing primarily on Kristin Neff's excellent article on the myths of compassion.¹

Compassion Beckons

As my master's degree in New Testament Studies was drawing to its end, I had become disillusioned with my current field of study and simply wanted to be done with it. The sense of wonder and curiosity about the ancient world and languages that inspired me to pursue graduate education had been sapped by the vitriol dominating my experience of the field. In addition, the disdain for publishing accessible material for interested lay audiences presented an irresolvable tension around my concern for practical relevance. In addition to these concerns, my personal life was also suffering. Graduate education had honed my critical deconstructive argumentative

¹ Kristin Neff, "The 5 Myths of Self-Compassion," *Psychotherapy Networker*, September/October 2015, accessed January 10, 2018, <https://www.psychotherapynetworker.org/magazine/article/4/the-5-myths-of-self-compassion>.

skills, but not the ability to employ them strategically. My fiancée, Emily, was growing increasingly frustrated with my constant deconstruction of our conversations and the unnecessary tension this put on our relationship. Each night we would talk about our day and I would adeptly pick apart the inconsistencies in her thinking (because the best way to build intimacy is to point out your partner's faults). I am certain that our relationship would not have survived if it remained on this course for very long. Graduate school was having an immensely destructive influence on important aspects of my life.

I had one elective requirement remaining to fulfill course requirements, and my usual methods of course selection seemed dismally removed from my actual interests. So, I decided to select a course that I would not normally choose; one whose description seemed wholly uninteresting by my usual selection methods. I ended up registering for *Spiritual Formation for the Contemplative Way*. It seemed sufficiently antithetical to my current "interests."

Each class began with a meditation and group reflection afterward, and then proceeded into the lecture. I had never meditated before, and the class structure was not my usual way of doing things, but being a good graduate student I played along. I needed to fulfill the elective requirement, and at least it wasn't a New Testament Studies course. The initial meditation provided some interesting experiences, but nothing particularly profound. During the second class, however, I had a profound life-changing experience. While meditating, I felt a door to my inner world opening and a reawakening to life-giving sources of creativity, interconnectedness, and compassion. I did not know what to make of this experience. It was both exciting and confusing. I remember feeling refreshed on the walk back to my apartment. Like the first breath of Spring air after the cold winter I felt new life growing within me. I don't mean this poetically, I grew up in the Midwest and always looked forward to that first Spring day after the harsh

winter. After that meditation I drew this same refreshing breath, in southern California. It was not Spring.

When I talked with Emily about this meditation and the changes I was experiencing, she said, “I feel like I have you back again.” I was stunned. We had not connected emotionally for quite some time. How could we with my incessant critiquing? Yet, after only two weeks of compassion meditation Emily felt an intimate connection with me that had been dangerously absent. I felt it too. This was not the result of an intense retreat or some other drawn out process. Rather, after two weeks of graduate course work that involved compassion meditation Emily had me back again.² I began to feel like myself again. I was hooked. I didn’t know where this path was going to lead but I was going to follow it. Something capable of offering this kind of transformation was certainly worth my time. Eventually, the path of compassion would lead to transformative interracial relationships that would awaken a call to racial justice within me. After this class, I took a leave of absence from graduate school in which Emily and I were married. I returned to graduate school committed to spiritual formation and the way of compassion. Two weeks of meditation precipitated this transformation.

Why Compassion is needed

Why is compassion needed? In a word, reactivity. Compassion practices offer tools for responding to reactivity in ourselves and others not steeped in shame, guilt, revenge, or retribution. Instead, these practices harness human capacities for connection, intimacy, imagination, and feelings to understand ourselves as always worthy and deserving of love and relational connection.

² Given the point I am trying to make about the importance of compassion for holistic transformation in my life specifically here, and in general throughout the chapter, it is worth noting that writing this story years after the events occurred still moves me to tears of compassionate joy.

Compassion also has the capacity to save lives. Depression is common among graduate students, and people with depression have a higher risk of suicidal ideation than people not experiencing depression.³ I am no exception. These topics are not openly discussed in college environments in my experience. While difficult for me to write, I hope this story brings attention to this crucial issue and demonstrates the potential for compassion to mitigate acting on suicidal thoughts.

Pursuing a doctorate has been stressful for me, even in a program focused on spiritual formation and compassion. During moments of extreme stress, perhaps accompanied by depression, I have experienced thoughts of suicide. The worst night of these episodes occurred while my wife and I were living on campus. I do not remember the events that caused such high levels of stress for me, but late one night I found myself in the kitchen drawing a butcher's knife from the chopping block. My whole mind was consumed with ending my life. It was the only possible way out of this situation. The stress was intolerable. It was unbearable. Accomplishing all the tasks that were required of me was impossible. Besides, nobody would miss me that much anyway. The knife in my hand held the only answer to this problem. Ending my life would provide the sweet release I desperately needed. I stood there, thinking about whether to plunge the knife into my stomach or slash my wrists, when a small quiet voice earnestly called out from the recesses of my mind, "Emily loves you." That's all it quietly said, but it gave me pause to think. One part of me said if we go through with this, Emily won't be able to love you. Another said even if you don't love yourself right now Emily does. Yet another exclaimed, "How are we going to get out of this stressful situation!" None of us had the answer, but we decided that because Emily loved me it was worth finding a different solution.

³ Graduate Assembly, *Graduate Student Happiness & Well-Being Report* (Berkeley: University of California, 2014), 1, accessed January 10, 2018, ga.berkeley.edu/wellbeingreport.

Compassion, between Emily and me, prevented me from taking my life that night. Because I had experienced compassion from my wife in the past I was able to remember it during that moment. The compassion she has shown me became a source of strength and guidance when I needed it most. Compassion allowed me to truly listen to that still, small voice calling out from the wilderness of my mind. Compassion allowed me to pause between thought and action and consider alternatives. Compassion saved my life that night.

Compassion Practice

The definition of compassion I use is found in the Compassion Practice, which provides the foundation for compassion formation we use in Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation (ERAST). By way of revealing my own commitments and potential biases, it is also the central practice in my own spiritual life.

The Compassion Practice is a deceptively simple process for connecting and re-connecting to the compassionate core within us. The Compassion Practice was created at the Center for Engaged Compassion (CEC) by Frank Rogers, Andrew Dreitcer, and Mark Yaconelli.⁴ The CEC is especially focused on practical skills and tools that enable people to embody compassion and engage the world in compassionate actions for justice, healing, and transformation. The main transformative focus of the compassion practice itself is to cultivate compassion for oneself and for others, and then to engage the world by taking action as a result of this compassionate awareness. The foundations of this practice are in the vibrant and rich tradition of Christian mysticism, particularly Ignatian spirituality, Internal Family Systems

⁴ “Center for Engaged Compassion Homepage,” Center for Engaged Compassion, accessed March 13, 2018, <http://www.centerforengagedcompassion.com>.

therapy (IFS), and current physiological and neuroscience research on emotions and compassion.⁵

Andrew Dreitcer provides a theoretical framework for the Compassion Practice based on the concept of spiritual capacities.⁶ The importance of understanding these capacities is brought out through metaphors with physical exercise. Dreitcer suggests thinking of spiritual capacities as, “muscles of the interior life that do the work of the practice and grow stronger in the process.”⁷ Deepening this metaphor, if I want to have more muscular arms I need to understand what muscle groups are involved and what movements will most effectively increase the muscle mass of my arms. Analogously, capacities are spiritual muscles that we can strengthen through spiritual practices that highlight certain capacities. Building compassion requires strengthening the group of capacities that relate to compassion. Strengthening other capacities, while beneficial, will not make us more compassionate. In our exercise example, strengthening my leg muscles, while beneficial, will not help build the muscle mass of my arms.

Dreitcer identifies six capacities needed for the cultivation of compassion. These are divided into foundational capacities and compassion capacities. “Foundational Capacities establish a base, a foundation on which to build compassion. They are *intention*, *awareness*, and *attention*. Compassion Capacities build compassion on the foundation laid by the Foundational

⁵ Andrew Dreitcer, *Living Compassion: Loving Like Jesus* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2017); Richard C. Schwartz, *Internal Family Systems Therapy* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995); Alane Daugherty, *From Mindfulness to Heartfulness: A Journey of Transformation Through The Science of Embodiment* (Bloomington: Balboa Press, 2014); Frank Rogers, *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville TN: The Upper Room, 2015).

⁶ Dreitcer, *Living Compassion: Loving Like Jesus*, 35.

⁷Dreitcer, 35.

Capacities. The Compassion Capacities are *feelings, intimacy, and imagination*.⁸ These six capacities are defined as follows:

Foundation Capacities:

Intention – “...the process of consciously turning toward whatever the practice involves and being willing to let that process unfold.”⁹

Awareness – “...the ability to notice whatever is happening in any moment....
The point of practices teaching open-awareness, whether directed toward our internal world or our external world, always consists of a continuous flow that leads from briefly noticing to releasing and then to repeating that process, noticing, releasing, repeating.”¹⁰

Attention – “...the ability to focus for an extended period – to notice something and to stay focused on it rather than to release it.”¹¹

Intention, awareness, and attention are present in every spiritual practice.¹² However, every practice does not emphasize them equally. A specific practice may focus on one or more foundational capacities.

Compassion Capacities:

Intimacy – “...our ability to form deep, vulnerable relationships with others.
Intimacy is a profound stance of presence towards each other that forms a safe, secure foundation for a new way of being to unfold.”¹³

Imagination – “...encompasses the range of mental images, dreams, and fantasies that flow through our inner world...
depending on how one uses the power of imagination it can lead to fixations rather than freedom, obsessions rather than openings. Some Christian spiritual practices discourage using the imagination for this reason. But compassion

⁸ Dreitcer, 35.

⁹ Dreitcer, 37.

¹⁰ Dreitcer, 37-38.

¹¹ Dreitcer, 38.

¹² Dreitcer, 40.

¹³ Dreitcer, 40.

practices embrace it. They show us how to harness the power of imagination for enlivening ourselves, our relationships, and our service in the world.”¹⁴

Feelings – “...covers the wide range of emotions we experience in relation to the many movements of daily life.”¹⁵

Dreitcer points out the distinction between feelings and emotions drawn by emotion researchers, but acknowledges that he is using them interchangeably to refer to the range of complex experiences commonly referred to as feelings and emotions.¹⁶

The Compassion Practice highlights and strengthens each of these capacities at various points. In the final chapter I will describe how the framework of capacities enables translating the Compassion Practice to meet the needs of people in varying contexts. This proved to be a crucial issue during our study, and the metaphor of linguistic translation provides a useful approach to this important issue.

The compassion practice involves four main movements, and each of these is crucial to the process of cultivating compassion. Importantly, the process for cultivating compassion for ourselves and others is the same.

1. Catch your breath (Get grounded)
2. Take your PULSE (Cultivate compassion for yourself)
3. Take the other’s PULSE (Cultivate compassion for another)
4. Decide what to do (Discern compassionate action)

Catching your breath is crucial for engaging our inner worlds, difficult conversations, and other triggering activities. When we are feeling triggered or reactive it is important to find some space emotionally and/or physically for our reactivities to settle. The quiet voice that told me

¹⁴ Dreitcer, 41.

¹⁵ Dreitcer, 41.

¹⁶ Dreitcer, 149n10.

“Emily loves me,” gave me the space to walk myself back from the cliff of suicide. This step crucially involves returning to those activities that rejuvenate us. For example, some of the activities that help my emotions to settle are hiking with my wife, playing board games, building with Legos, exercising, and meditating. The time we need to ground ourselves may be a quick momentary breath, or it may require years before we feel grounded enough to engage the situation more clearly.¹⁷ Dreitcer emphasizes that, “...you can accurately ‘Take Your Pulse’ only to the extent that you are grounded in the Presence of Compassion...Attending closely to yourself in ‘Taking Your Pulse’ requires the clarity and stability that come through continually soaking in the Presence of Compassion.”¹⁸ The compassion I had received in the past from Emily literally became a life giving source while in the grips of suicidal ideation. Once we have caught our breath we can move into the heart of cultivating compassion. Throughout this process we can return to grounding ourselves in compassion whenever we feel the need.

The heart of the Compassion Practice involves six essential components that Frank Rogers outlines with the acronym PULSE. Every experience of compassion however large or small involves the following six dimensions. These six dimensions, therefore, provide our definition of compassion:¹⁹

P – Paying attention (Contemplative awareness). Perceiving another’s experience with a nonjudgmental, nonreactive clarity.

U – Understanding empathically (Empathic care). Being moved by the sometimes hidden suffering within that person.

¹⁷ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 28.

¹⁸ Dreitcer, *Living Compassion*, 130.

¹⁹ My purpose for using the first person plural possessive determiner ‘our’ is not to claim credit for this definition of compassion, for which I cannot take credit, but to place myself within this approach and tradition of cultivating compassion.

L – Loving with connection (All-accepting presence). Being filled with and extending an all-embracing care.

S – Sensing the sacredness (Spiritual expansiveness). Recognizing and savoring the cosmic expanse of compassion that holds and heals all wounds.

E – Embodying new life (Desire for flourishing). Yearning for the restorative flourishing to be birthed within another.

ACT – Then from the PULSE of this compassionate connection, we respond with tangible acts of healing, kindness, and care.²⁰

Paying attention highlights the capacities of awareness, attention, and intention. Usually, our awareness of other's and how we relate to them is filtered through our own feelings, needs, wants, and desires. We see them through the lens of our own agenda. We usually do not see them on their own terms. In this movement of the Practice our intention is to pay attention to the experience of another person or an interior movement within us without filtering it through the reactive lens of our own agenda. Through maintaining open awareness toward our interior movements, we become grounded in the, "...Self-presence that is genuinely open to the movement and curious about why this movement is within us at all."²¹ In this way we can perceive another's experience with a nonjudgmental, nonreactive clarity that is undistorted and unfiltered by our own agenda or judgments.

Understanding empathically involves feeling 'got.' It is a visceral feeling of being understood at our core. In its simplest form compassion involves being moved by the suffering or joy of another's experience. When this happens,

...a compassionate person allows another's pain or joy to reverberate within his or her deepest core such that he or she is moved to pathos before the other's suffering or stirred to delight before the other's flourishing. A compassionate person understands, in his or

²⁰ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 27.

²¹ Rogers, 70.

her depths, the wounds, heartaches, and longings at the core of another person's behavior and experience.²²

It is easy to see the capacity of *feelings* highlighted here. In addition, intimacy is also exercised as we are moved by the experience of joy or suffering we are bearing witness to.

Loving with connection involves an all accepting presence. At the heart of compassion is a non-judgmental, all embracing, loving quality. There is no easy way to conceptually explain loving connection. It is usually done through metaphor. Crucially, loving with connection involves experiential awareness of it. Rogers uses the metaphor of a mother cradling her child to illustrate the intimacy of this connection.²³ The conceptual difficulty of this movement highlights the importance of the capacity of imagination. The experience of this loving embrace is more easily conceptualized through imaginative imagery, than explanative prose. For example, Rogers imagines loving with connection as, “well[ing] up with a connective care that extends toward others like the soothing wash of the sunlight's warmth.”²⁴ Loving connection highlights the capacities of intimacy, imagination, and feelings.

Sensing the Sacredness is, perhaps, a unique contribution to compassion offered by the compassion practice. It is notably absent from Kristin Neff's threefold definition of self-compassion, which otherwise resonates with the Compassion Practice.²⁵ It is worth noting, however, in other writings Neff affirms the importance of self-compassion in the ‘great spiritual traditions of the world.’²⁶ Sensing the Sacredness is the cosmic expanse of compassion that is

²² Rogers, 24.

²³ Rogers, 25.

²⁴ Rogers, 25.

²⁵ “The Three Elements of Compassion,” Center for Mindful Self-Compassion (website), Kristen Neff, accessed December 11, 2017, <http://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>.

²⁶ Neff, “The 5 Myths of Self-Compassion.”

capable of healing and holding all wounds. It is a spiritual energy. “When our hearts open to others’ suffering and a sustaining love flows through us, the veil of the everyday world we live in is pierced and relativized...In those moments, our spirits expand – our capacity to care deepens, our understanding for the plight of another extends, and our patience can seem infinite.”²⁷ In these moments we often feel a deep connection to humanity, nature, the universe, or God. However we name it we feel connected to something larger than ourselves. In the final chapter I will return to sensing the sacred as it became an interesting theme during analysis with implications for program implementation.

It is common when studying compassion to become fixated on suffering. After all, compassion is a powerful way to address suffering in the world. *Embodying new life* reminds us that compassion, in addition to grieving with those who suffer, also desires the transformation of their suffering into joy.²⁸ ‘Genuine compassion takes as much delight in others’ flourishing as it feels pathos for their pain.’²⁹ Compassionate care gives rise to the yearning that wounded persons flourish.

Finally, compassion is incomplete and becomes sentimentality if it does not involve restorative action. The last movement, Act, takes some step to ease suffering or promote flourishing. Dreitcer adeptly emphasizes the restorative nature of compassion:

Compassion is not the same as ‘niceness.’ Nor is it weak. Compassion is wisely-shaped, informed, ‘feeling-with’ behavior that will take the form of tough love or gentleness depending on the situation. Genuine compassion requires courage, accountability, clarity, and truth. Compassion does not try to answer some version of ‘What will help everyone feel good?’ Nor does it demonize or denigrate those who cause harm. Compassion does

²⁷ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 25.

²⁸ Rogers, 26.

²⁹ Rogers, 26.

not seek retribution. Rather, it aims for what will help bring true healing, vitality, and freedom to all involved, victims and perpetrators alike.³⁰

Undergirding the compassion practice is a non-pathologizing view of our interior worlds. The Compassion Practice begins with the assumption that we have a core Self that is naturally compassionate. As humans, we are fundamentally wired for connection.³¹ We want to love and be loved. “Our Self is our true nature and the ground of our being. It is the pulse of love ever beating at the center of who we are.”³² Being in Self is the ideal state of awareness in which we are free from enmeshment with our interior movements and can view them without becoming possessed by them.

Our core Self often becomes obscured by reactive emotions such as anger, fear, despair, and disgust. Internal voices and behavioral impulses harass us or drive us to work, stay busy, play, or numb out.³³ The compassion practice borrows language from Internal Family Systems therapy (IFS) to collectively describe these internal movements as parts.³⁴ Richard Schwartz used this term to refer to aspects of our internal worlds because this was the word his clients used to refer to their interior movements. It is common for many of us to refer to ourselves in this way. For example, part of me wants to go to the party, but another part of me wants to stay home and read a book. In the Compassion Practice, aspects of our internal worlds are referred to as parts or interior movements interchangeably. This highlights the influence of Psychological research on the development of the Compassion Practice.

³⁰ Dreitcer, *Living Compassion*, 30.

³¹ Daugherty, *From Mindfulness to Heartfulness: A Journey of Transformation Through The Science of Embodiment*. Alane Daugherty’s Heartfulness techniques offer a scientific expression of the Compassion Practice.

³² Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 61.

³³ Rogers, 62.

³⁴ Schwartz, *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, 57.

The Compassion Practice groups parts into five recognizable categories. These categories are (1) emotions, (2) internal monologues and inner voices, (3) impulses and desires, (4) images, daydreams, and fantasies, (5) bodily sensations.³⁵ Each of these interior movements influence how we see the world moment to moment and habitually in ways that isolate us from our compassionate core. When gripped by an interior movement, we are robbed of our sense of agency over our lives and act in ways that we later regret. We are so enmeshed with the interior movement that we lose our sense of Self and view reality through the energy of that movement. In those moments, ‘It feels as if we *are* the anger that consumes us...we *are* the incompetent frauds our self-hatred rebukes us to be.’³⁶ Rogers continues with the powerful assertion that, ‘our emotions, impulses, and inner voices are not who we are in our cores.’³⁷ Rather, they are parts of ourselves crying out for attention, and obscuring our compassionate core.

There are two typical responses to the appearance of an interior movement, acting out or resisting. ‘Acting out is an unconscious surrendering to the possessive power of the movement’s energy and demands...It is a state of enslavement to the interior movement taking over the driver’s seat of our souls.’³⁸ This is the reactive enmeshment that causes us to act in ways that we later regret. Resistance involves suppressing internally the interior movement’s energy through subjugation or sheer force of will. It is an attempt to be rid of the interior movement entirely, commonly through shame and self-judgment. Rogers importantly notes that resistance is enmeshment not in the interior movement itself, but in the repelling energy that resists and reacts

³⁵ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 63.

³⁶ Rogers, 64.

³⁷ Rogers, 64.

³⁸ Rogers, 64-65.

to the interior movement.³⁹ Neither acting out or resistance bring healing or restore us to our compassionate cores.

Restoring ourselves to our compassionate core requires taking the U-turn. Usually, we try to alter our suffering by maintaining focus on the external world. If we can change the circumstances it would change the way that we feel. Rather than maintaining focus on the external causes of our distress compassion invites us to take a U-turn and attend to the activated movements within us.⁴⁰

There are two psychological observations underpinning the U-turn. First, ‘...we can maintain a grounded Self-awareness free from enmeshment within *any* interior movement.’⁴¹ It is the state of Self mentioned earlier, and is characterized by nonreactive, nonjudgmental openness toward interior movements. While not compassion, this state of Self-awareness is the pre-requisite for cultivating compassion. Cultivating this stance is the focus of the first movement of the Compassion Practice, ‘Catching Your Breath.’

Second, “...our discordant interior movements are rooted more within ourselves than in the world outside.”⁴² For example, the different reactions people have listening to the same song demonstrates the locus of reaction within the listener, not the song itself. If it were in the song we would all react the same way to every song. Ultimately, this insight is liberating. The agency, ‘...to claim and retain our own humanity lies in us and not in others.’⁴³ How we respond to others does not depend on what they do, even when their treatment may be harmful or

³⁹ Rogers, 65.

⁴⁰ Rogers, 66.

⁴¹ Rogers, 66.

⁴² Rogers, 67.

⁴³ Rogers, 67.

provocative. We have the power to claim our own humanity and dignity through compassionately tending our interior chaos.

A final crucial concept for understanding the U-turn and conceptualizing interior movements is that every interior movement we experience, ‘...is rooted in a cry of pain or a need straining to be heard.’⁴⁴ This is, perhaps, the most radical and counterintuitive insight offered by the Compassion Practice. Interior movements contain important wisdom for our lives. Instead of being the barriers to spiritual freedom, they are our guides to it. Yet this understanding is often obscured by our habitual ways of interacting with these parts of ourselves. Usually, we distract or suppress our inner movements in an attempt to manage them. This may work as a short-term solution. However, in the end our interior movements elude attempts to be managed and those emotions, drives, and impulses return in full force trying to fulfill their longing to be heard.

The U-turn offers a radically new relationship with our inner worlds. Through taking the U-turn, we are invited to hear and understand the pain of our interior movements. We are invited to care for ourselves the way we care for our loved ones in times of need. As we extend this care to our interior movements compassion begins to fill us up and they relax and make their needs known. When this happens, we experience genuine compassion.⁴⁵

In the process of taking the U-turn, the Compassion Practice offers an exercise that, “...helps [us] see difficult interior movements in a positive light.”⁴⁶ Comprised by the acronym FLAG, it is a tool that can be used anytime we are having difficulty extending compassionate care to ourselves or others. By asking the FLAG questions of an interior movement we come to understand the root of its suffering:

⁴⁴ Rogers, 68.

⁴⁵ Rogers, 69.

⁴⁶ Dreitcer, *Living Compassion*, 118.

F – *Fear*. The movement is terrified of an imminent danger – perhaps rejection, ridicule, violation, attack – and mobilizes to protect us from the threat. We can ask the reactive movement what it might fear?

L – *Longing*. The movement yearns for something essential to our flourishing – for renewal, freedom, love, or life. What longing does the interior movement have that is unfilled?

A – *Aching wound*. Pain from the past still stings and bleeds and when triggered in the present, cries out to be held and healed. These wounds could come from shame, abuse, abandonment, or neglect. What aching wound within the part is not healed?

G – *Gifts obstructed*. The movement holds the burgeoning seed of a talent or a personal capacity that has been denied and buried and is bursting to be claimed and nurtured into flourishing – the gift, perhaps, of our voice, power, tenderness, or art. What gift within the interior movement has not had a chance to be offered to the world or to flourish?⁴⁷

FLAG is designed to help deepen empathic understanding of an interior movement and give rise to compassionate care. This tool employs the capacity of imagination to view the distressed interior movement in ways that easily give rise to intimate connection for us. As many of our interior movements arise from traumatic childhood experiences, it is common to view them as children. Others imagine them as injured puppies.⁴⁸ The important key for FLAG images is that, “they need to easily and automatically evoke a compassionate response in you.”⁴⁹

For Andrew Dreitcer, catching your breath (grounding in compassion) and FLAG are the heart of the Compassion Practice.⁵⁰ He affirms that FLAG is a tool to return to when you get stuck, frustrated, confused, or overwhelmed. It is a powerful resource that activates the Compassion capacities (imagination, intimacy, feelings), “...to rewire our neural networks, emotions, and entire bodies from the inside out for healing, freedom, and restoration.”⁵¹

⁴⁷ Rogers, *Practicing Compassion*, 71. The questions are taken from Dreitcer, *Living Compassion*, 120.

⁴⁸ Dreitcer, *Living Compassion*, 122.

⁴⁹ Dreitcer, 122.

⁵⁰ Dreitcer, 118.

Comparative Analysis of Compassion Formation Programs

Many programs exist to facilitate difficult conversations and cultivate compassion. The linking threads between the programs in this chapter are compassion, and their creation within a context of needing to address real world problems. They arose because their creators understood the power of compassion to address issues in their particular contexts. From a practical theological view, these programs grew out of the lived experience of their creators seeing suffering and seeking to address it. While not religious in any traditional sense, all of these programs focus on themes, concepts, and issues with which I regularly interact as a theologian. My goal in presenting these programs is to show a range of ways to address difficult conversations and cultivate compassion, and to bring the compassion practice into conversation with them through comparative analysis.

I like to think about the many compassion formation programs that exist as voices in a choir singing the hymn of compassion. A choir is composed of many voices singing one hymn, but not necessarily in unison. Each section sings their part, which contributes to the rich harmonic complexity of the hymn. The hymn sounds complete when all voices are singing their parts. Similarly, each of these programs adds a crucial voice to the hymn of compassion. While each voice sings a different part, they are all needed for the hymn to achieve its fullest expression. Compassion formation programs can take many forms. This rich complexity of approaches gives compassion its fullest expression, and allows people to find their voice within the hymn of compassion.

Non-Violent Communication

⁵¹ Dreitcer, 121.

Non-Violent Communication (NVC) is a communication process created by Marshall Rosenberg.⁵² It is a method of communication, and for Rosenberg was a spiritual way of living, designed to help us connect with what we need at any given moment. It helps us connect to what is most alive for us. Yet it is not simply about getting our needs met without consideration for others. Rosenberg eloquently characterizes action as the heart of NVC, “The spirituality we need to develop is one that mobilizes us for social change. It doesn’t just enable us to sit there and enjoy the world no matter what. It creates a quality of energy that mobilizes us into action. Unless our spiritual development has this quality, I don’t think we can create the kind of social change I would like to see.”⁵³

There are four basic steps in the process of NVC, (1) Observations, (2) Feelings, (3) Needs, (4) Requests.⁵⁴ They are designed to help us identify what we are feeling and needing without getting caught in reactive energies. Using these steps, it is possible to connect more fully and deeply with people.

(1) Observations –When making observations, the goal is to state them in ways that are free of judgment and evaluation. The acronym PLATO helps identify the core of this step. PLATO stands for people, locations, actions, time, objects. These provide the reference points for making appropriate observations. Naming observations in terms of PLATO helps prevent distorting non-observational judgments from being made.⁵⁵

⁵² Marshall Rosenberg, *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life*, 2nd ed. (Encinitas CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2003).

⁵³ Marshall Rosenberg, *The Heart of Social Change: How You Can Make a Difference in Your World* (Encinitas CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2005), 6.

⁵⁴ Rosenberg, *Non-Violent Communication*, 6.

⁵⁵ Jane Marantz Connor, Dian Killian, *Connecting Across Differences: Finding Common Ground with Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime*, 2nd ed. (Encinitas CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2012), 111.

(2) Feelings – The goal here is to identify one’s feelings in ways that reflect one’s actual feelings. While this sounds strange, it is common for people to locate the origin of their feelings in something other than themselves (i.e. “you made me angry”). NVC views feelings as neutral. They are just part of how we perceive the world. The goal is to identify them without valuation. “I feel angry,” indicates a feeling. “You’re making me angry,” indicates valuation and external origination.⁵⁶

(3) Needs – Here the goal is to identify and state our need in the present moment. What need of mine is currently being unmet? This is a core principle of NVC. When our needs are met tension eases and communication becomes easier. It is important to note that meeting our needs without regard for the other person defeats the purpose of NVC. The goal is to meet our needs in ways that allow others to have their needs met as well, and to be a part of having their needs met.⁵⁷

(4) Requests – The final step is making a request of the other person that is grounded in observations of the situation, an understanding of one’s feelings, and founded on an understanding of the unmet need. The request is made to fulfill one’s need.⁵⁸

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions of NVC is the conceptual de-categorization of good and bad. NVC sees the labeling of good and bad as a major source of suffering in the world. Instead, they affirm the importance of needs. This shift away from good vs. bad dissolves the morality and ensuing power dynamics of moral rightness. Seeing people in terms of needs means that they are neither good nor bad, but are people yearning for their needs

⁵⁶ Rosenberg, *Non-Violent Communication*, 37-46.

⁵⁷ Rosenberg, 52-53.

⁵⁸ Rosenberg, 67-85.

to be met. Through NVC Marshall Rosenberg offers a depth of spirituality that is beautiful, profound, liberative, and desperately needed in the world.

Public Conversations Project⁵⁹

The Public Conversations Project (PCP) grew out of the concerns of a group of family therapists who sought ways to use this style of therapy in communication between groups of people with differing views. The goal of PCP dialogue is mutual understanding and connection.⁶⁰ Often PCP dialogue results in partnerships and connections that were unforeseen or thought impossible at the outset. Another outcome is the disruption of conflict perpetuating forms of and interaction. The PCP process is designed to inhibit or prevent habituated conflictual forms of communication and interaction.

PCP facilitators engage in extensive preparation and groundwork. The first assessment is whether a PCP dialogue is appropriate for the community seeking their services. This conveys an important understanding and awareness about the limits of what PCP has to offer. For example, PCP does not engage in dialogues where participants are pressured or required to attend. Valuing this commitment as a structure in the process ensures appropriate application of their carefully constructed program. The commitment is to foster ownership on the part of participants for the dialogue. To encourage this commitment, PCP facilitators meet with community members on all sides of the proposed issue to gain an understanding of their interests and experiences on the issue.

⁵⁹ During the late stages of writing this manuscript the Public Conversations Project renamed themselves Essential Partners: Bold Explorations in Community.

⁶⁰ Maggie Herzig and Laura Chasin, "Fostering Dialogue Across Divides: A Nuts and Bolts Guide from the Public Conversations Project," Public Conversations Project, 2006, accessed January 5, 2018, http://www.publicconversations.org/docs/resources/Jams_website.pdf.

Once the planning preparation is completed the dialogue can take place. This is done ideally over several sessions. The dialogue itself is conducted in a highly structured environment and process. This involves attention to place setting, pacing, and adjusting to the needs and interests of the participants as appropriate. In addition, communication agreements are constructed with participant input. They are crucial for the flow of dialogue. Every participant must affirm the communication agreement, and is encouraged to take part in its creation. PCP emphasizes the emergent aspect of a communication process that allows for deep and honest exploration of an issue. Participants are given space to share their own experience related to the topic of the dialogue. Part of the process involves honoring the communication agreements if one feels strongly about someone's sharing, and also affirming the importance of understanding rather than judging. Another emergent aspect mentioned above is the creation of unforeseen partnerships resulting from the dialogue. PCP facilitators affirm that mutual communication and understanding often gives rise to a desire to act and work together. This is truly profound when one considers the origin of this work in dialogues about abortion!

PCP is, perhaps, the most dissimilar from the other programs due to their focus on a highly structured external environment. This process focuses more on externally structuring the conversation environment to facilitate understanding, rather than drawing extensive attention to our internal worlds. I offer this as observation and not critique. Participants of PCP do indeed experience profound moments of connection and internal validation.⁶¹ In addition, PCP's knowledge of the importance of external conditions for fruitful conversations offers insight for more internally focused programs that may underestimate the significance of this issue.

⁶¹ Robert Stains, "Repairing the Breach: The Power of Dialogue to Heal Relationships and Communities," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10, no. 1 (2014), accessed December 18, 2017, <http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/vol10/iss1/art7>.

Compassion Cultivation Training

The Compassion Cultivation Training (CCT) program is part of The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University School of Medicine. Tupten Jinpa, senior author of the CCT course, describes the course goals, “CCT Aims to make people become more aware, be more connected with their compassionate nature so that their instinctive response to a given situation will come from that compassionate understanding standpoint rather than negative excessive judgment.”⁶² There are three over-arching goals of CCT. These are (1) the development of the strength to be present with suffering, (2) the courage to take compassionate action, and (3) the resilience to prevent compassion fatigue. Achieving these goals will help facilitate a wide range of practical concerns that participants may have, ‘...from improving personal and work relationships to making a positive difference in the world.’⁶³ The program combines mindfulness practices, and psychological and scientific research to teach participants how to lead a more compassionate life.

CCT defines compassion as, “...a process that unfolds in response to suffering. It begins with the recognition of suffering, which gives rise to thoughts and feelings of empathy and concern. This, in turn motivates action to relieve that suffering.”⁶⁴ The program identifies the natural capacity of humans for compassion, but notes that daily stress, social pressures, and life

⁶² Tupten Jinpa, “Why Cultivate Compassion,” The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, accessed January 11, 2018, video, 3:10, <http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/about-compassion-cultivation-training-cct/why-cultivate-compassion/>.

⁶³ “About Compassion Cultivation Training,” The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/about-compassion-cultivation-training-cct/>.

⁶⁴ “Compassion Cultivation Training: Frequently Asked Questions,” The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/compassion-cultivation-training-faqs/>.

experiences make it difficult to express our capacity for compassion. Cultivation is needed and requires daily practice, a supportive environment, patience, proper tools, and steady care.⁶⁵

The training process is an 8-week program that includes mindfulness practices, coursework, assignments, and an alumni group.⁶⁶ Mindfulness practices focus on daily meditations that foster loving-kindness, empathy, and compassion. Coursework includes a weekly 2-hour class with lecture, discussion, meditation, and small group listening and communication exercises. Homework assignments are given to help students apply compassionate thought and action in their own communities. Participants are invited to join the alumni group after completing the course. Course graduates are invited to attend the alumni group – a free monthly session at Stanford University for group discussions that keep them abreast of the most recent research on compassion.

Mindful Self-Compassion

Kristin Neff is a leading scholar and pioneer of self-compassion research. Her program, Mindful Self-Compassion, draws on her substantial research to teach people how to become more self-compassionate.⁶⁷ Neff's nuanced definition of self-compassion is crucial for understanding her approach. Similar to the Compassion Practice, self-compassion, for Neff, is cultivated the same way as cultivating compassion for others.⁶⁸ It begins with noticing one's suffering, then feeling moved by our suffering to respond to the pain. This involves feelings of

⁶⁵ "Compassion Cultivation Training: FAQ."

⁶⁶ "About Compassion Cultivation Training," The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education, accessed January 1, 2018, <http://ccare.stanford.edu/education/about-compassion-cultivation-training-cct/>.

⁶⁷ "The Program," Center for Mindful Self-Compassion (website), Kristen Neff, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://self-compassion.org/the-program/>.

⁶⁸ "What is Self-Compassion?" Center for Mindful Self-Compassion (website), Kristen Neff, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>.

kindness, care, warmth, and a desire to relieve our suffering. Self-compassion also means extending care and understanding to ourselves rather than harsh self-judgment and criticism. Finally, having self-compassion helps us understand that suffering, failure, and imperfection are part of the human experience.

Neff's definition of self-compassion is threefold. *Self-kindness*, *common humanity*, and *mindfulness* form her tripartite definition. *Self-kindness*, "...entails being warm and understanding toward ourselves when we suffer, fail, or feel inadequate, rather than ignoring our pain or flagellating ourselves with self-criticism."⁶⁹ *Common humanity* works against the tendency to isolate when things do not go the way we want or expect. It, "...recognize[s] that suffering and personal inadequacy are part of the shared human experience – something that we all go through rather than being something that happens to "me" alone."⁷⁰ Neff emphasizes a balanced approach to our negative thoughts and feelings so that they are not exaggerated or suppressed. *Mindfulness* is the way she achieves this balance. Mindfulness is a non-judgmental, receptive mind state in which one observes thoughts and feelings as they are, without trying to suppress or deny them. We cannot ignore our pain and feel compassion for it at the same time. Simultaneously, mindfulness requires that we not be "over-identified" with thoughts and feelings, so that we are caught up and swept away by negative reactivity.⁷¹ Neff offers a beautiful summary of self-compassion in her advice on how to practice:

Self-compassion is a practice of goodwill, not good feelings. In other words, even though the friendly, supportive stance of self-compassion is aimed at the alleviation of suffering, we can't always control the way things are. If we use self-compassion practice to try to make our pain go away by suppressing it or fighting against it, things will likely just get worse. With self-compassion we mindfully accept that the moment is painful, and

⁶⁹ Neff, "What is Self-Compassion?"

⁷⁰ Neff, "What is Self-Compassion?"

⁷¹ Neff, "What is Self-Compassion?"

embrace ourselves with kindness and care in response, remembering that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. This allows us to hold ourselves in love and connection, giving ourselves the support and comfort needed to bear the pain, while providing the optimal conditions for growth and transformation.⁷²

Way of ColorInsight

The Way of ColorInsight is of particular interest as Rhonda V. Magee uniquely and powerfully synthesizes critical race theory (CRT) with mindfulness based contemplative practices, while drawing on inclusive and identity safe research in her synthesis as well.⁷³ The Way of ColorInsight is the most robust program of its kind with which I am familiar, and has provided guidance, wisdom, and inspiration in the development of ERAST.

Professor Rhonda V. Magee developed this pedagogical approach in the context of legal education. She constructed The Way of ColorInsight by drawing on a wealth of research on race and racism, education theory, learning theory, legal theory, and her own life experiences. This summary draws attention to salient themes for our program, particularly Magee's emphasis on life experiences, inclusive and identity-safe teaching strategies, and contemplative pedagogy.

Magee's influential article on The Way of ColorInsight, "...introduces the idea of curated, adapted compassion- and mindfulness-based practices – experienced at the level of the personal, interpersonal and the systemic -- as central components of effective if lifelong paths of insight and understanding around issues of race, social identity and their impact in the world."⁷⁴

⁷² Kristin Neff, "Tips for Practice," Center for Mindful Self-Compassion (website), Kristen Neff, accessed January 11, 2018, <http://self-compassion.org/tips-for-practice/>.

⁷³ Magee, "ColorInsight," 52.

⁷⁴ Magee, "ColorInsight," 4.

Magee shares her own experience of law school to illustrate concrete examples of the hegemonic function of legal education.⁷⁵ Her story concretizes the very real and oppressive consequences that people of color endure because of colorblind views of race. It is not an abstract impersonal concept or theory, but one with tangible effects on people of color's ability to fully flourish.

The way in which she shares her stories also invites her students to reflect on their own life experiences for insight and wisdom. In this way, she creates space for everyone's experience to be a source of wisdom for their own lives and for others. It becomes a communal sharing ritual that lays the foundation for cultivating compassion.

Inclusive and identity-safe teaching practices are an important component of Magee's teaching philosophy.⁷⁶ Inclusivity in her classrooms, "...refers to the philosophy and pedagogy of engaging and valuing every student, and seeking to enhance the relational dynamics of the class as a whole, by intentionally attending not merely to the intellectual but also to the social and emotional climate of the classroom."⁷⁷

Identity safety refers to the level of safety a student feels in the classroom about their identity. Magee cites research on stereotype threat to illustrate the damaging consequences of insecure identity safe environments, as well as the positive consequences for members of the non-stigmatized group.⁷⁸ Classrooms committed to inclusivity and identity safety demonstrate several aspects: "(1) Diversity is an explicit value, (2) relationships between and among co-

⁷⁵ Magee, 7-9.

⁷⁶ Magee, 16.

⁷⁷ Magee, 6.

⁷⁸ Magee, 14.

learners are valued, (3) learning is student-centered, (4) caring is made visible.”⁷⁹ Creating a teaching environment founded on the principles of inclusivity and identity-safety lays the groundwork for engaging in difficult conversations about race and racism. For students to deeply and authentically engage these emotionally laden and personal topics a foundation of safety and trust is essential.

Magee points to the work of Daniel Barbezat and Mirabai Bush for a definition of Contemplative pedagogy.⁸⁰ A crucial focus of contemplative teaching and learning is “an inward or first-person focus that creates opportunities for greater connection and insight.”⁸¹ Drawing on Hal Roth she notes that, “Contemplative here refers not merely to methods, but to an epistemology, an approach to knowing that complements third-person, objective epistemology and sources with first- and second-person methods.”⁸²

Teachers employing these methods seek: “(1) to support students in developing focus and increasing attention, (2) to deepen understanding of course material through contemplation and introspection, (3) to increase compassion and connection, (4) to deepen students’ engagement with the deep, underlying questions of the discourse, (5) to inquire into the nature of their minds, emotions/sensations, values and applications of their learning for meaning and ongoing insight.”⁸³

⁷⁹ Magee, 14.

⁸⁰ Magee, 17.

⁸¹ Daniel P Barbezat and Mirabai Bush, *Contemplative Practices in Higher Education: Powerful Methods to Transform Teaching and Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014), 5.

⁸² Magee, “ColorInsight,” 17.

⁸³ Magee, 18.

Magee rightly asserts the subversive potential of contemplative pedagogy. “With its tendency to support the development of awareness of unspoken assumptions, and the dawning of insight into interconnectedness, contemplative pedagogy may inherently work against hidden assumptions that normalize hierarchy-enforcing behavior.”⁸⁴ This potential for subverting hierarchical behavior is grounded in interconnectedness and compassion. It is a subversion that cultivates authentic human flourishing.

The way of ColorInsight is clearly a labor of love, and a landmark text for researchers, activists, and practitioners seeking to address issues of race and racism through contemplative practices and compassion. I am taking up Magee’s invitation to educators in the 21st century and focusing on compassion as a central component in education about race and racism. Interacting with Magee’s work has deepened my inspiration and commitment to anti-racist, inclusive, identity-safe ways of teaching and being in the world. Her work provides a language to express many of my own intuitions about how a class should be structured, and has significantly pushed my thinking in directions I was headed, and in unanticipated ways.

Comparative Insights

Analyzing these programs has led to fascinating insights about the nature of compassion, and the myriad of ways it can be understood and cultivated. Each of these programs affirm compassion as a core constituent of human beings. This is what unites their voices in the hymn of compassion. Yet, each program views compassion slightly differently, giving rise to crucial harmony in the hymn.

⁸⁴ Magee, 11.

PCP emphasizes the Importance of dialogic spaces, getting to know the players involved, and the need for detailed attention to creating the space. This is crucial for engaging in difficult conversations. They understand the value of a code of conduct, an external agreement for how to behave, and that all participants agree to follow the mutually created agreement. If, during the conversation, someone strays from the mutual-agreement, participants can re-ground the conversation by reminding them of their commitment to abide by it. Emphasis is placed on understanding other perspectives and that understanding is not the same as condoning,

The Compassion Practice, Non-Violent Communication, Compassion Cultivation Training, Mindful Self-Compassion, and ColorInsight more explicitly focus on cultivating compassion. In addition, more detailed attention is given within these programs to the nature of our internal worlds. Interestingly, apart from minor variances the definition of compassion is virtually identical across these programs. However, the process of cultivating compassion varies significantly. By this I mean the understanding of the interior world, how we should relate to it, and the practices that flow from these assumptions differs considerably, while the general understanding of compassion remains largely consistent across spiritual and religious traditions.

Compassion Cultivation Training, Mindful Self-Compassion, and ColorInsight utilize Mindfulness as a core part of cultivating compassion, and understanding our internal world. As Rhonda V. Magee points out, self-compassion has traditionally been part of classical mindfulness practices but were lost in the adoption of mindfulness by Western audiences.⁸⁵ She attributes the renewed interest in self-compassion among mindfulness teachers and practitioners largely to the research and publications of Kristin Neff. Following Magee's assessment, Neff's

⁸⁵ Magee, 33.

definition, summarized above, serves as the basis for my understanding of compassion within the framework of mindfulness.

Andrew Dreitcer highlights a prominent difference in the way that compassion is cultivated in the Compassion Practice. This difference rests on a core assumption of the Compassion Practice that our inner worlds are composed of internal movements with which we can interact. From this perspective it is possible to cultivate compassion bit by bit through focusing on a single interior movement, rather than all at once.⁸⁶ For Dreitcer, this difference is what allows him to effectively cultivate compassion without becoming overwhelmed, or paralyzed by feelings of inadequacy, ineptitude, embarrassment, or fear.⁸⁷ This is true for me as well.

There are three more distinctive differences in the way the Compassion Practice cultivates compassion. First, no matter how reprehensible or abhorrent their outward behavior all interior movements at their core yearn for wholeness. They possess some wisdom and are trying to help us flourish. The baby that cries for their mother's love becomes the toddler that throws a tantrum for their mother's love. Both are yearning for wholeness, but the toddler has not yet learned to request it more clearly. Similarly, our interior movements may not understand how to clearly express their genuine need for our love. From this understanding the second distinction arises. Engaging our interior movements for understanding, rather than letting them go or replacing them with an infusion of positive emotion, is essential for cultivating compassion. Continuing the metaphor, letting the toddler go or trying to suppress their yearning for affection with some other emotion only makes the problem worse. Understanding the yearning for affection at the core of their tantrum enables the mother to respond with compassion.

⁸⁶ Dreitcer, *Living Compassion*, 122.

⁸⁷ Dreitcer, 122.

The third distinctive contribution of the Compassion Practice is an emphasis on the sacred. Compassion Cultivation Training and Mindful Self-Compassion emphasize interconnectivity. This is drawn from the Buddhist principle of dependent origination. All life is interconnected and interdependent. The Compassion Practice understands interconnectivity as an essential aspect of the sacred. Additionally, compassion is understood to exist as a life-giving source with which one can be in relationship. This compassionate source (i.e. sacred) is often expressed with divine imagery, and commonly referred to as God. The dynamic relational aspect of the sacred source of compassion enables care to be given and received in unique ways. For example, through the sacredness of compassion I receive and experience compassion as a relationship of care. This allows me to receive and provide care for myself in ways that were not possible during traumatic events in my youth. This relationship forms the foundation and means for healing past wounds.

I point out these differences to demonstrate the necessity for variety in contemplative and spiritual practices. Within the hymn of compassion, mindfulness and the Compassion Practice represent different voices, perhaps bass and alto. Both are important and crucial for the hymn and allow more people to find their voice within it. Some people are well suited to sing alto, while others prefer singing bass. Adding more parts to the choir increases the harmonic richness and fullness of the hymn. It also allows more people to find their voice within the hymn of compassion. What other new voices are yearning to be heard as we further the goal to lift every voice and sing?

The Compassion Practice, The Way of ColorInsight, Non-Violent Communication, Public Conversations Project, Compassion Cultivation Training, and Mindful-Self Compassion all emphasize action toward social transformation as an indispensable part of cultivating

compassion. Whether the actions are large or small, they form an important part of the heart of cultivating compassion in these programs. NVC, PCP, and ColorInsight are programs with established records of social impact. The Compassion Practice, Mindful Self-Compassion, and CCT also have a record of compassionately impacting the lives of people, and their impact on issues of social justice is rapidly growing.

Critiques of Compassion

Teaching compassion practices gives rise to a constellation of predictable critiques. I have even raised some of the following critiques myself in my journey to live more compassionately. While not encompassing every critique that might be raised, Kristin Neff has identified five of the most common “myths of self-compassion.”⁸⁸ The first myth is that self-compassion is a form of self-pity in which we feel sorry for ourselves. Neff dispels this myth by emphasizing research on compassion demonstrating decreased tendencies to ruminate, which is correlated with anxiety and depression.⁸⁹ Rather than a form of self-pity, self-compassion is actually an antidote to self-pity.

The second myth is that self-compassion means weakness. Toughness is a prominent cultural value. It is the primary way we are taught to respond to life’s difficulties. Common phrases demonstrate the ubiquity of this narrative, as in “Tough it out,” “You need to toughen up,” and “Be a man.”⁹⁰ Displays of emotion, particularly those associated with vulnerability, threaten toughness. Compassionate actions are commonly, though by no means only, tender,

⁸⁸ Neff, “Myths of Self-Compassion.”

⁸⁹ Neff, “Myths of Self-Compassion.”

⁹⁰ The last example underscores the intersectional nature of oppression. To be a man is to be tough. Women, according to this patriarchal narrative, are weaker and not as capable of toughness. Men, being tough, do not show signs of weakness through displays of emotional vulnerability. I trust the deeply sexist and destructive nature of this narrative is readily apparent.

caring, emotive, and kind. These characteristics are not reflective of resilience from the perspective of toughness. Neff points out, however, that researchers are finding self-compassion to be a powerful source of coping and resistance. For example, higher displays of self-compassion during divorce were associated with better psychological adjustment during the time of the divorce and nine months later.⁹¹ Neff insightfully points out that studies like these suggest how we relate to ourselves in the midst of life's difficulties is what determines our ability to cope, rather than simply what we face.

The third myth is that self-compassion leads to complacency. Basically, this critique assumes we are motivated by some form of self-flagellation. We only strive to do better if we are punished when we fail. Self-compassion (misconceived as being nice and letting ourselves off the hook) will undermine our motivation to push ourselves and do better. Neff points out that honest recognition of our failure, sympathy for our unhappiness, and encouragement to go beyond this bump in the road is a caring response that helps us maintain our self-confidence and feel emotionally supported.⁹² She emphasizes research demonstrating self-compassion as a far more powerful force for personal motivation than self-punishment. From this research Neff concludes that self-compassion strengthens personal accountability. "When we can see beyond the distorting lens of harsh self-judgment, we get in touch with other parts of ourselves, the parts that care and want everyone, including ourselves, to be as healthy and happy as possible. This provides the encouragement and support needed to do our best and try again."⁹³

The fourth myth is that self-compassion is narcissistic. This refers to the confusion between self-esteem and self-compassion. Neff brilliantly problematizes our cultural predilection

⁹¹ Neff, "Myths of Self-Compassion."

⁹² Neff, "Myths of Self-Compassion."

⁹³ Neff, "Myths of Self-Compassion."

for high self-esteem. For example, bullies have high self-esteem because putting others down inflates one's sense of self. This underscores the problem with an emphasis on acquiring self-esteem rather than creating happy and morally just people. Self-esteem does not create better people, and must be maintained. I couldn't help but think of Donald Trump while reading about this myth. He is an example par excellence of a narcissistic approach to maintaining self-esteem. I am not familiar with any previous sitting president engaging in a public battle (via twitter in this case) with an individual person. In short, self-esteem must be protected at all costs. Projection of one's emotions onto others, blame, and deflection are the primary means by which self-esteem is maintained. It is a fragile fair weather friend, and equating our self-worth with high self-esteem has disastrous results. Again, think of Donald Trump.

Self-esteem is a feeling and like other feelings it is transient, impermanent, and changing. Rather than emphasizing self-esteem, Neff highlights self-compassion as a more stable means of psychological wellbeing. Evocative of NVC, Neff points out that self-esteem is a positive evaluation and judgment of self-worth.⁹⁴ Self-compassion, however, is not a judgment or evaluation at all. It is, Neff rightly asserts, "...a way of relating to the ever-changing landscape of who we are with kindness and acceptance—especially when we fail or feel inadequate. In other words, self-esteem requires feeling better than others, whereas self-compassion requires acknowledging that we share the human condition of imperfection."⁹⁵

The fifth myth is that self-compassion is selfish. In general, we tend to view taking time to address our own needs, and providing self-care as selfish acts. As Neff observes, this is particularly true amongst women, who are socialized to be caregivers but not to care for

⁹⁴ Neff, "Myths of Self-Compassion."

⁹⁵ Neff, "Myths of Self-Compassion."

themselves.⁹⁶ Neff also points out the irony that being compassionate to ourselves helps us be compassionate to others. The physiological basis for this ‘irony’ are mirror neurons, which reproduce in ourselves the feelings we see in others. In situations where people routinely bear witness to suffering this can lead to burn out, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma. However, mirror neurons also work the other way round. So, when we are tending to someone who is suffering, self-compassion gives us a protective buffer that helps us understand and care for the person who is suffering without being depleted by their suffering.⁹⁷ If we are grounded in self-compassion then others (via mirror neurons) will also feel compassion.

Conclusion

Compassion practices offer tools for self-care and connection with others, but compassion is also a way of life. It is a path that requires dedication, commitment, forgiveness, and grace. My own commitment to compassion as a spiritual path has transformed, and even saved, my life. Combining compassion with leading theories on race and racism forms a powerful way of embodying and living anti-racism. The Way of ColorInsight expertly demonstrates this reality. The next chapter will provide my own modest contribution to this way of living.

⁹⁶ Neff, “Myths of Self-Compassion.”

⁹⁷ Neff, “Myths of Self-Compassion.”

Chapter 4

Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation

Introduction

This chapter focuses on our program, Embodying Racial Formation for Social Transformation (ERAST). Overall, the goals of this chapter are to provide a conceptual understanding of ERAST and to give the reader an idea of how we implemented the program and the curriculum we used. I begin with sharing how compassion and race became intertwined in my life. This is followed with a description of how we have synthesized the compassion practice, critical race theory, and racial formation theory in the formation of ERAST. Finally, I describe the general flow of the program we used during the study.

Straight in to Compton (Compassionately Embracing Race)

The intermingling of compassion and race began when Chris and I became friends during our first semester of graduate school. Our friendship has substantially influenced the trajectory of my graduate education and continues to profoundly shape most aspects of my life. One of the more auspicious events occurred when Chris invited my wife and me to attend First United Methodist Church of Compton where he was pastoring at the time. Initially, I felt awkward and out of place, but Chris had invited us to attend, and the congregation warmly welcomed us. The church community is almost entirely African American and Tongan.¹ After the service, Chris invited us to attend the following week. My wife and I had been looking for a church to attend, and we liked Chris's preaching. Furthermore, the church community had been warm and

¹ Separate worship services were held as the Tongan service was conducted in Tongan. Joint worship was held once a month on communion Sundays, and I always felt a deep sense of respect between the two communities.

welcoming, so we decided to attend the following week. Eventually, we decided to make the weekly trek from Claremont to Compton and joined the church. Little did I know how much my life would be transformed at church in Compton.

I vividly remember one Sunday, sitting in church by the choir, listening to Pastor Carter's sermon, when suddenly I was embraced by a felt-sense of interconnectivity. My whole body radiated, and I felt that something profound was taking place. It was a brief but powerful epiphany that I have not been able to accurately describe with my own words. Thomas Merton's eloquent description of a similar experience resonates with me:

“In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the centre of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed by the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness.”²

I, too, felt at Compton that they were a part of my community and I was a part of theirs. The compassion and love in the relationships we formed together transformed my life. In the midst of an African American church community, I, a white male, felt welcomed and loved. I felt at home. I felt and experienced the love of God that surpasses all understanding. I began to see race and racism in ways that were new to me. Church took on a different, more socially relevant meaning. I knew to my core that I belonged at Compton. I could no longer continue to pretend that race was something ‘out there.’ It is intimately within me as well, and affects my church family that I love so dearly. I was no longer content to focus on race for my own edification. I needed to study race and racism in my academic work as well. For the sake of my church community and to honor what they were teaching me, I needed to do this with compassion.

² Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 153.

Mari Matsuda's influential insight reflects my experiences participating in the church community in Compton. "The imagination of the academic philosopher cannot recreate the experience of life on the bottom."³ In Compton, I witnessed the reality of oppression and marginalization that African Americans face in ways unavailable in the halls of academe. Upon invitation, I participated in the worship services by offering my musical gifts. Through this relational invitation, I learned practical ways of subverting racial hierarchy. Metaphorically, if whiteness continually lures me into the destructive bliss of racial colorblindness, then participating in the spiritual community of Compton kept me compassionately moored to the reality of racism in the United States.

My education about and commitment to confronting issues of race and racism were birthed in Compton through the compassionate presence of my church family. Held in the expansive compassionate embrace that we call God, my church family could deeply and authentically see me, and I was able to see them in the genuineness and authenticity of their full humanity. The program Chris and I have developed is born out of these experiences.

Synthesis of Racial Formation Theory, Critical Race Theory, and the Compassion Practice

Evoking the hymn of compassion, I conceptualize our work in terms of jazz music. In a jazz ensemble, how a musician views music is influenced greatly by the instrument they play. For example, I play the saxophone. When I think about how to play chords and notes I usually picture how they are produced on a saxophone. If you ask me what jazz music is, the music I recommend and musicians I talk about will primarily include saxophonists. My understanding of jazz music is filtered through the lens of a saxophone. If you ask a drummer, they will give you a different answer – as will a bassist, guitarist, trombonist, and vocalist. We all view jazz music, in

³ Matsuda, "Looking," 63.

part, through the concrete mechanisms of how our respective instruments produce sound.

Understanding the characteristics that each instrument contributes to the sounds of jazz yields a fuller knowledge of jazz music than is offered by any particular instrument alone.

Gaining this knowledge requires three forms of practice. First, we must each pursue our own instrument more deeply through solo practice. It is easier to understand the nuances of jazz music with the knowledge of how to play a specific instrument. While the lens of our instrument will filter how we understand jazz, it is not possible to understand jazz without understanding our instrument and how it shapes our view of jazz. Therefore, it is important to devote time to developing knowledge of our instrument. Second, we must pursue deeper knowledge of our instrument through practicing in ensembles of like instruments. For example, I learn more about how to play the saxophone by practicing, listening, and discussing with other saxophonists. The detailed knowledge they have gained from their own practice can inform my approach in ways that other instruments cannot. Third, we must come together to play, discuss, and listen to music as a full jazz ensemble. In this context each of us contributes our instrument-specific musical skills to deepen our understanding of jazz, and create music together. The best jazz musicians listen to other instruments to inspire and hone their craft. Ella Fitzgerald listened to saxophone players to inform her approach to singing. Dexter Gordon listened to vocalists to inform his approach to the saxophone.

The flow of a jazz ensemble rehearsal involves group practice. Section rehearsals allow time for like instruments to practice together. These take place during group rehearsal, and I remember stretches of time sitting quietly in boredom. However, I also remember learning more about my part of the music during these times as well. Individual practice is necessary to facilitate difficult musical passages, and mostly occurs outside of group rehearsals. Practice

alone, practice with other like instruments, practice together as an ensemble are essential for understanding and playing great jazz music.

This metaphorically describes our approach to race and racism. Our particular racialization is the instrument we play. In a similar way that our instrument filters our perception of jazz, our racialization filters our perception of race. Correspondingly, it is not possible to accurately understand race without understanding how our racialization affects our understanding of race and reality. Deepening knowledge of our “instrument” requires three similar forms of interrelated practice. First, through individual spiritual and contemplative practices we come to know our racialization more intimately and accurately. Second, through practice, discussion, and listening to other similarly racialized people we come to understand our own racialization more thoroughly. Third, practicing together in interracial spaces deepens and informs our own understanding of race and racism. Witnessing the way that others experience race and racism transforms how we understand and practice anti-racism. It takes practice and time to learn how our voices fit together. Sometimes, in my musical experience, the trumpets were too loud and needed to play more quietly so that other harmonies and melodic lines could be heard. Similarly, we must come together in interracial spaces and practice being together. Like the trumpets, white people must learn to listen closely to the harmonies and melodic lines of people of color (which involves talking less). This kind of listening is one important way to practice our “instrument”.

Our program is a metaphorical jazz ensemble. We offer an ensemble space in which participants learn about race and racism as a group. “Sectional rehearsals” occur in the form of small group discussions, and intentional times of centering the experiences of people of color. Individual practice is assigned as homework and occurs outside of program sessions.

ERAST is foundationally interracial and practical. We know from our own experience that interracial relationships are essential for undermining racism and white supremacy. Studies also show that positive interracial experiences are an effective intervention for ameliorating implicit bias, stereotype threat, and racial anxiety.⁴ We in no way want to diminish the importance of communities of color being in fellowship with each other, or white people gathering to understand and confront their whiteness. These are crucial contexts for subverting racism and promoting flourishing. What we want to emphasize is that subverting racism must also involve living interracially. Doing this requires communities who are committed to living this reality, even though it is difficult to realize.

Our program begins with the foundational assumption of the Compassion Practice described in the previous chapter. At our core, we yearn for wholeness, vitality, flourishing, and connection, but we live in a world that obscures this reality. Racial social structures shape our minds and bodies in ways that diminish the capacity of our compassionate core to help us lead flourishing lives. Restoring ourselves to our compassionate core, therefore, is a crucial part of anti-racist work and of self-healing. The view of interior movements offered by the Compassion Practice allows the complex perspective needed to engage difficult racial internal work. For example, as a white male, I understand whiteness as a constellation of interior movements within me, rather than the totality of who I am. This allows me to compassionately tend to and understand these white parts of myself. Exercising the capacities necessary for compassion (intention, awareness, attention, imagination, intimacy, feelings) in this way enables me to take responsibility for the ways in which my whiteness perpetuates racism and racial hierarchy, without becoming caught up in the reactivity of those internal movements. Using the FLAG practice allows me to understand the yearning for wholeness at the root of their racist cries. We

⁴ Godsil et al., *Science of Equality*, 44-55.

are, at our core, compassionate. We yearn for connection and sociality. We yearn for relationships. However twisted and abhorrent the behavior may manifest, at its core our parts yearn for connection - even those most filled with racism.

Counterintuitively, a structural analysis of race is a central component for understanding how we manifest racism interiorly. The fount of racist behavior at the individual level is driven largely by structural dynamics that condition our minds. In short, our minds and bodies are structured to view reality as racialized. Another important assumption informing our approach is drawn from critical race theory. We view racism as normal, not aberrational.⁵ We understand this to mean that if we are not actively seeking ways of being anti-racist, then we are in some way perpetuating racism. For example, that African American men are considered dangerous is driven by racist cultural narratives. At the individual level, therefore, a white person exhibiting this attitude (implicitly or explicitly) can rightly be called racist because they manifest and perpetuate that structural narrative, regardless of their conscious intent or awareness of that cultural narrative. Contra colorblind ideology, their racism is not a psychological illness confined to that individual. Such an individualistic view of race provides comforting ignorance and offers a scapegoat for white people to avoid understanding their role in perpetuating racism. Understanding how or even that these narratives influence our behavior and undermine our agency requires compassionate forms of self-reflection. Compassion practices aid both the process of cultivating awareness about how racialization shapes our perceptions and behavior and the self-healing and humanizing that is integral to sustainable racial justice efforts.

Drawing on the theory of racial formation, we view ERAST as an anti-racist racial project. To recall, “A racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources

⁵ Bonilla-Silva, “Rethinking Racism,” 475.

(economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines.”⁶ Omi and Winant define an anti-racist project, “...as those that *undo or resist structures of domination based on racial significations and identities*.”⁷ The primary goal of ERAST is to begin undoing and resisting structures of racial domination by forming in participants engaged compassionate awareness of the subtleties of one’s racialization, offering key insights of structural race theorists, and engaging compassionate actions for racial justice. ERAST aims to provide concrete ways of embodying our racialization and discerning how we are called to compassionately engage the world as a result of this new awareness. The structural forces that give rise to racial formation and hierarchy within the United States constitute our racial identities.⁸ Consequently, unmasking how these forces have shaped us internally is a crucial aspect of undoing and resisting structures of racial domination.

Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation is constructed on four pillars. Each pillar is interconnected and builds on the knowledge and skills of the previous pillar. For this reason, it is imperative that none of them are skipped. Collectively, the four pillars comprise the necessary components for embodying awareness of our own racialization and compassionately engaging difficult conversations about race. The first pillar fosters curiosity about our own and other people’s experience of the world. We do this by creating a classroom environment capable of holding the complex feelings emerging from the growing awareness about our racialization. Trust is a critical part of establishing genuine holding spaces. Inclusive and identity safe pedagogies are important components for deepening these spaces.⁹ Sharing our

⁶ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 125.

⁷ Omi and Winant, 129.

⁸ Omi and Winant, 137.

own stories both models the practices and begins establishing trust. Students are actively invited to create the space as well, in part, through co-creating shared agreements for conduct.

The second pillar of the program cultivates the contemplative practices necessary for paying attention to one's experience from a compassionate, grounded, non-reactive stance. This pillar of the program receives considerable time as these skills are foundational and necessary to understand subsequent material. We use contemplative practices drawn from the Compassion Practice and those of our own design to strengthen the capacities necessary for cultivating and embodying compassion.

The third pillar introduces important critical race theory themes, the theory of racial formation, and the reality of race as a social fact. In addition, we begin asking participants to reflect on themselves as racialized beings and their place within the racial hierarchy of the United States further deepening their racial embodiment.

The fourth pillar emphasizes the engagement of our growing awareness and embodiment of race for compassionate liberative action. Embodying our racialization precipitates new ways of living in the world. As a result, we want to actively invite participants to discern and name their own invitation to engaged, compassionate action for racial justice. We ask what participants are discerning and what actions they will take to fulfill them. We also emphasize that the invitations we experience may be small or large. It is the genuineness and sustainability of these invitations that is important, not their size or scope.

Flow of The Program

In this section I describe the general flow of ERAST. For a fuller description of the lesson plans see appendix C. The program took place over seven sessions meeting two days per

⁹ Magee, "ColorInsight," 5-6.

week. Each session lasted 80 minutes. The lecture portion of each session drew out important themes from the readings and devoted time to answering questions that participants had about the reading or homework. Small groups helped participants more thoroughly explore the material through discussion and reflection. Each session also involved engaging contemplative practices.

We conceptualized ERAST in two broad movements. During the first movement we taught the Compassion Practice, which forms the foundation for engaging grounded conversations. By honing the foundational and compassion capacities (attention, awareness, intention, imagination, intimacy, feelings) participants gained crucial skills for engaging subsequent program material. The second movement focused on critical race and racial formation theories. These theories help contextualize participants' deepening awareness of race, particularly their own racialization, within a larger structural framework of race and racism. This enabled participants to understand how racism socializes us to view the world in specific ways. Our hope was for participants to begin understanding themselves as actors within the racial hierarchy of the United States, and that their racialization affects their available actions.

We began the first movement of ERAST by telling our own stories of becoming interested in compassion and race. Sharing our stories served two purposes. First, participants came with varying internal and external awareness of race and racism which could have led to rising tensions if mishandled. For this reason, it was crucial to create an environment in which participants felt safe, understood, and willing to engage the depth and complexity of race and racism.¹⁰ We used our stories to create this space. Second, our stories showed how compassion practices have shaped our lives. Modeling how these practices actually help was crucial for participants to authentically engage them. Participants were able to see through our stories how

¹⁰ I am grateful for Rhonda's insight into the importance of identity safe and inclusive classrooms as part of transformative race education.

we use these practices in our own lives. In addition, modeling our mistakes and how to navigate them demonstrated our willingness to be vulnerable and honest, which created trust with participants. Our stories also demonstrate how to return to practices in times of difficulty and that focusing on perfecting these practices can be counterproductive. We emphasized the goal to continually return to spiritual practices as a way of life. As race and racism are changing forces, so too must be our responses to them.

After introducing ourselves we engaged a contemplative practice we call the whiteboard practice. The core of this practice involves noticing, naming, and externalizing our difficult thoughts, feelings, and sensations. A crucial learning goal of this practice is the importance of emotions as sources of wisdom. During this practice we asked participants to name the emotions that arise for them in conversations about race. As emotions were named, we wrote them on a whiteboard until participants had named all they wished to share. Then we asked participants how often these emotions have explicitly been part of conversations about race in their experience. We then pointed out that all of these emotions are present in conversations about race whether we choose to acknowledge them or not. We welcomed the emotions they had shared and emphasized that the wisdom within them is actually the key to sustainably engaging conversations and action on issues of race and racism. This practice begins honing the compassion capacities of feelings, intimacy, attention, awareness, and intention. After the whiteboard practice, we co-created a code of conduct that we all agreed to follow. This concluded the first session.

In the second session, we completed the code of conduct and introduced grounding and awareness practices. We lead participants through a sacred moment practice that involved remembering experiences that felt sacred or expansive to them – times when they were filled

with love, joy, life, wonder, or moments of heightened connection. This practice involved remembering one of these moments as fully and completely as possible – the sights, sounds, smells, feelings, tastes of the original experience. The sacred moment practice is a grounding practice that helps restore participants to a sense of Self. We pointed out that they could return to this practice whenever they felt the need to ground themselves.

The purpose of the sacred moment practice within the flow of ERAST is to provide an experience of what it feels like to be grounded. As ERAST continues to focus more explicitly on racism, course material becomes more triggering. Getting grounded is the first movement of the Compassion Practice and requisite for learning this deeper material. While not compassion itself, the capacities needed to remain grounded form the foundation for compassionate awareness, embodiment, and action. Remaining grounded is the cornerstone upon which engaged compassion is built. Having experienced a taste of what it feels like to be grounded, through the sacred moment practice, participants are able to assess their own level of reactivity and re-ground themselves if needed when learning more triggering course material.

In the third session, we introduced dynamics of attention that occur during conversations through engaging a contemplative practice we call the music practice. In this practice we played some music and invited participants to pay attention to what they noticed while listening to the song. We then asked participants to name what they noticed and began writing their observations on the whiteboard. The goal of this practice was for participants to experientially learn the distinction between what happens within the music and their reactions to the music. These distinct dynamics are often conflated and give rise to unnecessary conflict in conversations. We intentionally gave vague instructions to ensure normative listening, which would illustrate this conflation. While participants were offering observations, we categorized them into observations

about the music itself and reactions to the music that originated within the listener. As anticipated, participants eventually realized we were categorizing their observations in some way. When this occurred, we explained the distinctions and how we were categorizing them. Then we asked participants to listen to the song again and to pay attention to the distinction between what was happening within the music and what was happening to them in response to the music. After the song, we wrote their observations on the whiteboard, but asked participants to categorize their own observations. We were prepared for a third listening if needed. However, the second listening proved sufficient as participants seemed to understand the conversational dynamics we were highlighting.¹¹

We then explained that these are perennial dynamics in every conversation, including conversations about race and racism. Separating our reactions to what someone is saying from the content of what is said is a crucial skill for fruitful conversations about race and for cultivating compassion. Race stirs powerful emotions that lead to strong reactions. Utilizing the skills offered by the music practice hones the capacities of attention, intention, and awareness so that we can pay attention and respond in ways that harness the wisdom within our powerful emotions rather than chaotically reacting to them.

During the fourth session, participants completed the worksheet practice, which is designed to help participants compassionately engage racialized interior movements. When designing this practice, we borrowed heavily from the FLAG portion of the Compassion Practice.¹² The worksheet practice invites participants into relationship with an interior reaction they have chosen to be the focus of this exercise. We asked participants to pay attention to this

¹¹ Andrew Dreitcer uses similar practices in his pedagogy. I developed the music practice based on the contemplative capacities I learned in his courses.

¹² Frank Rogers, *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville TN: The Upper Room, 2015), 71-72.

interior movement by extending it a welcoming, non-judgmental presence of care that genuinely seeks to understand its experience. We asked participants to conceptualize their internal movement in an embodied way through questions such as what gender would this interior movement like to take? Is it racialized in any way? What is the interior movement feeling in the situation that activates it? Asking these questions helps participants understand the interior movement as part of themselves but not the totality of who they are. Next, participants asked the interior movement the FLAG questions (what are the fears, longings, aching wounds, or gifts stifled within the interior movement?). After finishing this conversation, participants were guided to ask the personified interior movement to summarize the conversation they just completed. After summarizing, we asked participants to discern a concrete way to extend compassion or participate in the flourishing of their interior movement. This step helps participants fully understand the deep wisdom yearning to be heard at the core of the interior movement. Finally, participants were asked to take the wisdom of this experience with them by thinking of a small tangible object that symbolizes their interior movement. This session concluded with assigning the Implicit Association Test (IAT) for homework and introducing the second movement of the program.

The IAT is designed to measure one's implicit bias about various issues and is easily available to take online.¹³ The version we use measures racial implicit bias, and consists of 140 prompts. Participants view African American children's faces, European American children's faces, pleasant words, and unpleasant words. As each prompt appears participants are asked to

¹³ Greenwald, Anthony G., Debbie E. McGhee, and Jordan L. K. Schwartz, "Measuring Individual Differences in Implicit Cognition: the Implicit Association Test," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 6 (1998): 1464–1480. For the version of the test we use see <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/agg/blindspot/indexrk.htm>.

quickly respond on the left or right side of the device being used to take the test. Response speed is crucial for accurate test results, as implicit bias is especially prominent during quick split-second decision making.

The fifth session began the second movement of ERAST, turning fully to issues of race and racism. Up to this point, the program devoted considerable attention to honing the capacities that cultivate compassion. While some may criticize our approach for not engaging structural racism sooner, we think the skills for cultivating compassion provide crucial tools for people of color to provide self-care and for white people to engage difficult racial realities unmasked by structural race theorists. Our choice to structure the program in this way is primarily to teach white people the resilience needed to substantively engage the study of race and racism.

This session began with a discussion of the IAT and participants' results. We asked participants to take the IAT as our curriculum transitioned from teaching the tools of compassion to more explicitly focusing on racial formation and critical race theories. Our purpose in placing the IAT here was to bring attention to the reality of racial narratives within us (in a way that can be somewhat unsettling), while turning the intellectual focus toward a structural view of race and racism. The IAT also provided the opportunity for participants to utilize the tools they learned throughout the first movement of the program. For example, how might compassion help in the context of stereotype threat arising from the results of white participants taking the IAT during our program? "Stereotype threat can occur for whites when concerned they may be perceived as racist...which diverts cognitive resources that could otherwise be used to maximize task performance."¹⁴ Almost invariably, white participants demonstrate a bias toward European faces when taking the IAT. Commonly, this is interpreted to mean they might be racist. The consequence is that the dominant cultural value of not appearing racist is undermined by their

¹⁴ Godsil et al., "*Science of Equality*," 13.

interpretation of the IAT results and stereotype threat may arise from worry of being labeled racist. Now is a crucial point in the process of white participants understanding their results. To the degree that stereotype threat has occurred, the participant will lose the cognitive resources to exercise intention, attention, and awareness to more deeply understand their results. However, according to Kristin Neff, self-compassion actually helps strengthen accountability for one's actions.¹⁵ Extending themselves compassion (by utilizing the practices they have learned) in the face of troubling results enables white participants to exercise the capacities that will help them understand how their results are bringing new awareness to their racial identity. Compassion strengthens resilience.

Deepening reflection on their results, we asked participants to notice their reactions to them. Are they experiencing a pull to explain away the results through some form of questioning its validity? If so, why? How might this response maintain the status quo? Are they curious about what their results might reveal about their own racialization? What interior movements are activated by these results? How might they be tended to reveal the wisdom within them?

After this discussion, we highlighted central themes from the reading on racial formation theory. Specifically, we drew attention to race as a social fact, the processes of racialization and racial projects, and how they have functioned socio-historically. The goal of this session was for participants to gain an intellectual understanding of racial formation theory. It was intentionally and importantly theoretically oriented.

Session six focused on the major tenets of critical race theory, and engaged a practice that cultivates compassion for others. We emphasized the foundational nature of race and racism in the United States and that race is our normal way of doing things. We underscored race and racism as the everyday experience of people of color which is largely invisible to most white

¹⁵ Godsil et al., 6.

people. These widely divergent experiences reflect the racial hierarchy of the United States. We also drew attention to the CRT themes of interest convergence, storytelling, centering the experiences of people of color, revisionist history, and intersectionality as well.

After concluding the discussion on CRT, we asked participants to practice cultivating compassion for others through engaging a story pair exercise, in which participant dyads shared their earliest memory of a racialized encounter. The purpose of this practice is to help deepen and expand the experience that comes out of our time in conversations about race and our sense of compassionately connecting with other peoples' experiences. This practice draws on the skills learned in previous practices by asking participants to attend to what is happening within them in the moment of sharing their experience and while listening to the experiences of their partner. We emphasized in this kind of listening that we are not waiting for a chance to speak or hoping for an opening to deliver some morsel of wisdom.

At the most basic level, this exercise simply involves receiving what we and others say with gracious, open acceptance, so that we might reflect it back without the weight of our own agendas. In this way, the listener becomes a safe receptacle for hearing experiences into greater life. Each participant was given the opportunity to share their story and listen to their partner's. In the role of listener, participants were asked to notice and set aside any urges to fix the speaker. If they recalled a similar experience of their own while listening, we asked that they recall themselves to the present moment and their role as listener. After each story, both the listener and the speaker were asked to write down what they noticed within themselves in response to the story and what they noticed in their partner as they shared their story. After the practice, we engaged in group reflection and de-briefing, entertaining any questions or insights participants had.

Session seven completed ERAST. In this final meeting we discussed the importance of discerning compassionate action. We pointed to specific examples of engaged compassionate actions around issues of race and racism to highlight the diverse ways in which compassion may be embodied and lived out in these contexts. We also asked participants to identify actions they felt called to take as a result of participating in ERAST. Discerning actions is crucial for sustainable efforts toward racial justice. Through discernment practices, we are able to reflect on our strengths and areas where we feel motivated, or called to take action. Harnessing our inner wisdom in this way gives rise to actions that resonate with our deepest longings. We think engaging in action from this compassionate stance leads to more sustainable involvement around issues of race and racism than those we merely ‘think’ seem right.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shared the foundation of ERAST in my own experiences participating and joining a Tongan and African American church community in Compton. I then described how we synthesize critical race and racial formation theories with the Compassion Practice to create ERAST. I also provided a picture of the general flow of our program to give an idea of the kinds of practices and concepts participants engaged. The next chapter focuses on the qualitative study we conducted to measure the effectiveness of ERAST.

I want to conclude this chapter emphasizing the origin of this program, and its personal importance to me. Our program, for my part, grew out of my experiences with people of color. At Claremont School of Theology, my friendship with Chris became the catalyst for a myriad of transformations in my life. Our willingness to be open, authentic, honest, and vulnerable with each other formed the compassionate foundation for us to explore race together, interracially.

Participating in the spiritual community in Compton immersed me in a community of color and led to compassionate relationships in which I learned intimately about race and racism from the lived experiences of people of color. I do not mean to sound overly deferential, nor do I want to evoke racial stereotypes of the wizened elderly African American. But my life was truly transformed in Compton. I would not be where I am or who I am today without the love and compassion I received there.

Chapter 5

Evaluating the Effectiveness of ERAST Through Qualitative Research

I head down the concrete steps past the fountain and across the promenade on my way to class. The university sits atop a hill overlooking much of the city with an expansive view of the harbor and the Pacific Ocean beyond. The campus is adorned with Spanish style architecture, and the sun shines brightly on a warm winter day in California. It is a well-endowed university and most of the student population come from affluent families. This collegiate environment stands in stark contrast to the modest campus of the poorly endowed theological school where I am pursuing doctoral work.

Like many collegiate institutions today, the public image of the university lightly veils deeply seated racial tensions and conflict on campus. Students of color regularly experience racism on campus. Microaggressions, stereotype threat, implicit bias, the increased mental load of not making white students uncomfortable, and institutional apathy toward concretely addressing the concerns raised by the Black Student Union. Donald Trump has just taken office and the campus is awash in the turmoil of his immigration ban, and a growing sense of hopelessness engendered by his administration's ineptitude.

As Chris and I enter the classroom I am overcome with a wave of anxiety and excitement about leading our program for the first time. I am bolstered and comforted that Chris is a part of this process. Our friendship and the fulfillment of one of my dreams (co-teaching with a dear friend) help me to re-ground and focus on the task at hand.

The classroom is non-descript. At the front of the room is a whiteboard covering the wall. As I stand and face the classroom, to my right is a small window, and to my left is the door to the

room and the console for running the digital projector. On the back wall is another whiteboard. Within the confines of this sterile classroom, we have attempted to set the space by arranging the desks into a circle so that students are able to see one another. Chris and I take our place within the circle and begin class. This is the classroom in which our program and the following study took place.

Purpose of Study

The genesis of this study began with the creation of our program Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation (ERAST). In the process of developing ERAST Chris and I realized that conducting a study evaluating its effectiveness would help us understand how people experience the program and make it more robust. Creating and conducting this study became a central focus of my dissertation. We primarily wanted to know how participants experience their racial identities when compassion is the lens through which it is explored. Compassion, in its capacity to promote emotional intelligence, is an essential component of flourishing relationships with self and others.¹ How would this compassion-based approach shift the way we talk about and understand our racial identities across the spectrum of racialization?

Chris was offering a course in the fall on Black and Womanist theologies. We decided the beginning of this class would offer an ideal setting in which to conduct this study. He graciously rearranged his syllabus so that we would have three weeks to devote to ERAST.

The issues we wanted to explore in our program are encapsulated in the four research questions that guided the formation and implementation of this study.

Question 1: Do participants experience increased awareness of their own racialization as a result of ERAST?

¹ Lisa M. Yarnell and Kristin D. Neff, "Self-Compassion, Interpersonal Conflict Resolutions, and Well-Being," *Self and Identity* 12, no. 2 (2013): 146–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2011.649545>.

Question 2: Do participants experience an increased sense of interconnectivity and compassion both toward themselves and others as a result of ERAST?

Question 3: How do participants perceive the function of race in the United States? Can they articulate the major tenets of CRT and the theory of racial formation?

Question 4: What invitation are participants experiencing toward engaged, compassionate action for racial justice? What actions can they take to respond to their invitation?

The experiences of participants are a crucial thread running through the primary research questions. Evaluative studies easily lend themselves to quantitative measures. Our interest in the experiences of participants, however, finds a more congenial fit in qualitative methods.

Methodology

The purpose of the study was to understand both the effectiveness of the program and the experiences of students who participated in it. My own interest in participant experiences stems from my primary discipline of spiritual formation. I am fascinated with how people understand themselves, others, and the world around them, and how people relate to and understand what is ultimate in their lives. I wanted to find an approach that allowed for a deep and rich understanding of student experiences that did not seek to reduce or essentialize them. The stories people share about their lives and how they experience race and racism have led to profound moments of discovery for me. It seemed important, therefore, to approach this study in a way that allowed students to share their stories with me.

Case study offers such an approach. It is particularly useful for assessing the experiences of participants. Saran B. Merriam asserts that “a case study design is employed to gain an in depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than

confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research.”² Merriam’s definition of case study underscores our prioritization of participants’ experiences as a means of evaluation. An exclusive focus on the *outcome* of racial awareness eclipses insight on the *process* of becoming more racially aware. We think that an emphasis on process, or becoming, shifts toward a growth mindset rather than fixed. This is essential for continued long-term engagement with the unstable nature of race and racism. Understanding participant experiences of this program will provide insight into the process of racial awareness.

In addition to focusing on process and meaning as part of a case study methodology, we wanted to investigate the effectiveness of ERAST. Is it worth developing further? How can it be improved? What did we do well? How were participants changed by engaging this program? Edith D. Balbach asserts that “a case study is particularly useful for evaluating unique programs, programs with unique outcomes, and programs carried out in turbulent or unpredictable environments.”³ Balbach’s definition of case study incorporates our interest in evaluation and effectiveness.

Robert K. Yin includes in his twofold definition of a case study that it “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.”⁴ Yin’s definition contributes greatly to the incorporation of racial formation and critical race theory themes, and spiritually formative principles into the research process. Critical race and racial formation theories, and spiritual formation provided the theoretical lenses through which I

² Merriam, S. B., *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 1998), 19.

³ Edith D. Balbach, *Using Case Studies to Do Program Evaluation* (Sacramento: California Department of Health Services, 1999), 17.

⁴ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2014), 17.

engaged the entire research process. I address these procedures more fully in the data analysis section.

Context

Primary research took place at a private Catholic university on the west coast. The student body is comprised of mostly white affluent students. Though within the city, the campus is largely a hermetic environment. Students spoke of the campus and the city as distinct locales, giving me the impression that interaction between the two was infrequent. The study was conducted during a course on Black and Womanist theologies in which ERAST comprised the first three weeks.

Internal Review Board Approval

I gained IRB approval for all research conducted in this study.

Participants

Twenty-five students enrolled in the class and participated in ERAST. Seven students participated in this study, and it is the data from those seven students that has been collected, coded, and analyzed. While it would have been preferable to collect data from all twenty-five students, this was not feasible for ethical and practical reasons. The names of the students have been changed to protect their confidentiality.

Participant selection was on a volunteer basis, and as an incentive to participate students were offered to skip two assignments later in the semester. Those students who emailed us after the first class and before the second were chosen to participate. Students who volunteered to participate in the study did not accurately reflect the demographic distribution of the overall class. The population of the class was primarily white students, while the participants in the study were

primarily students of color. I do not know the reasons for this distribution. It is possible that students of color were more interested in the subject material, or more open to discussing it in a public setting. Whatever the reasons, it is important to point out as the study could inaccurately imply a significantly diverse class population. Students of color in the class characterized it as mostly white.

All participants completed a demographic data form (table 1).⁵ We sought to understand, in basic terms, how participants identified themselves. The demographic data form allowed for written answers so that participants could provide information based on their self-understanding within the categories provided (age, gender, religious affiliation if any, ethnicity, racial self-identification, and sexual orientation). Participants were also encouraged to leave any portion blank that they did not want to complete.

Demographic Information of Participants

Name	Age	Gender	Religious affiliation, if any	Ethnicity	Racial self-identification	Sexual Orientation	Academic Major/Minor
Lauren	21	Female	Christian	Filipino	Filipino/Hispanic	Straight	Mechanical Engineering
Rebecca	21	Female	Christian (grew up Baptist)	African American	Black	Straight	Double major in Sociology and Ethnic Studies
Logan	22	Male	None	Asian (Han)	Asian	Female ⁶	Economics/ Business Administration and Anthropology

⁵ See appendix B for the form.

⁶ Logan is an international student. I have included his answer as he wrote it on the form. Logan has indicated his 'sexual orientation' toward women (i.e. heterosexual). I include his response in this way as an example of the cultural construction of categorical meanings, and how they become taken for granted within specific contexts.

Danielle	20	Female	Catholic	Black	Black	Heterosexual	Psychology/ Sociology
Gabrielle	20	Femme	--	Mixed race, Vietnamese and white	Mixed-race	Queer	Communication Studies/Gender Studies
Emily	21	Female	Don't believe in God...atheist?	½ Caucasian and ½ Korean	Same as above, perceived as "white" mostly	Straight	Behavioral Neuroscience/ German
Garrett	21	Male	Somewhat Christian	Caucasian	White	Straight	Mechanical Engineering/ International Business

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants.

Data Collection Methods

To assess the effectiveness of ERAST we collected data from multiple sources: before and after semi-structured interviews, written assignments, participatory observation, and facilitator reflections before, during, and after the primary research phase. Each interview was recorded on an Olympus recorder. The first three pre-interviews were recorded with the VCVA setting turned on. This setting is intended to reduce transcribing time and save battery life. The microphone shuts off at a preset decibel level and turns on again when sound reaches that same decibel level. However, the result was that the microphone shut off repeatedly and did not record considerable portions of the first three interviews. Consequently, those recorded interviews were largely unusable. I transcribed each interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

My own commitments are to human liberation, transformation, and recognizing the fundamental sacredness at the core of reality. I see the core of racism as separating people from this sacred core through alienation from themselves and others in vast and complex ways. The

compassion practice, and other similar practices, in their focus on connection and interconnectivity, have the potential to be directly subversive to the core aims of racism. This cannot be achieved by these practices alone, however. The requisite complement that allows their full potential for subverting racism is an accurate understanding of race and racism. Critical race theory and the theory of racial formation provide this understanding. The main thrust of this argument has been given attention in previous chapters. It is important here to highlight crucial aspects informing the research process.

I employed a lengthy reading and meditative process that involved self-reflection of my own experience of reading participant data. This process was necessary to surface my own feelings about the data so that I might be less prone to reactively incorporating those feelings into my interpretations. I began each reading and analysis session with a 20min compassion practice. This helped ground me and remain open to participants' experiences.

As a white researcher, I also wanted to remain abreast of the pitfalls this aspect of my identity brings to the study of race and racism. I utilized critical race theory themes and the theory of racial formation during the coding process. An example of this is asking myself if my interpretation follows predictable racialized narratives of white readings of people of color. I also reflected on how my interpretations might be racist, or might unintentionally reassert white dominance. In addition, Chris was a frequent dialogue partner during this process, which served to deepen my understanding of the material and to point out racialized aspects of the data that I may have missed.

Coding and analysis involved the use of MAXQDA to manage the voluminous amounts of data. I operationalized the research questions by creating two broad categories for coding. These were compassion outcomes and race outcomes. Each category was divided into four and

five sub-codes respectively. The coding process involved using apriori and in vivo codes. The apriori codes were created to assess initial outcomes regarding the effectiveness of ERAST. In addition, they provided a convenient starting point for lean coding, which helped mitigate coding overload.⁷ In vivo coding was intentionally employed to represent emergent data that arose during analysis. The in vivo codes pertain more to material presented in the final chapter and will be discussed there. These two coding strategies resulted in the final code scheme yielding a deep, rich, but manageable set of data. My coding scheme is outlined in figure 1.

Coding Scheme

Apriori codes

Compassion outcomes

1. Recognize and unblend with their emotions around race
2. Extend self-compassion to their emotions around race. Involves understanding of FLAG, what the needs are underneath, restoring self-presence.
3. Extent to which they can have compassion for others in their views of race
4. Extent to which they can have some kind of generative conversation with others around race (grounded, speak their own truth, being able to hear the other)

Race outcomes

5. Race is core to everyone's identity
6. Race is core in every dimension of society and human relationships (intersectional).
7. Our racial identity is socially constructed
8. Racism exists. Persons are treated differently by virtue of race
9. Do they feel equipped and committed to actions to transform racism? Both inner and outer actions

In vivo codes

10. Importance of sharing stories
11. Sense of the sacred
12. Dual listening
13. Interracial facilitator impact

⁷ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013), 184.

Figure 1. Coding Scheme.

Observations and Reflections

In this section, I provide a brief narrative description of each ERAST session and offer examples from participants of each of the codes identified above. In this way, it will be possible to gain a sense of both what happened during each session, and what participants experienced, as well as how they demonstrated understanding of and facilitation with each outcome. The compassion outcomes reflect the wording of our original intent. In implementation, we taught the Compassion Practice without explicitly asking participants to engage the practices around racialized interior movements. Our reasons for this decision were covered in the last chapter, but to reiterate facilitation with the tools and skills offered by the Compassion Practice form an essential foundation for engaging deeper and more difficult issues of race and racism. Additionally, Chris and I were concerned about introducing “contentious” race concepts to a predominantly white class too early. To put it bluntly, triggering white fragility would have been counterproductive to our goals. We exercised caution. Consequently, many of the examples provided reflect this shift in our approach. That is, participants demonstrated facilitation with the Compassion Practice but not always around issues of race and racism. This points to important changes needed during the first movement of ERAST.

Narrative description of ERAST sessions

During the first session students seemed engaged while we shared our stories of why we do this kind of work and how we became interested in it. During the whiteboard exercise students were reluctant at first to share the emotions they feel when talking about race. As expected, however, students shared more freely and enthusiastically as more emotions were named. Students were enthusiastic about participating in the study. When I asked for volunteers

at the end of class an overwhelming number of students approached me. To cull participants to a manageable number I asked interested students to email me before the next class. It is those students that became participants in this study.

Session two focused on getting grounded. Participants found the Sacred Moment practice helpful for understanding what it feels like to be grounded. Danielle shared that remembering her sacred moment caused her to experience similar feelings during the meditation that she felt in the original moment. This practice was impeded for some due to our inability to sufficiently describe what we mean by “sacred.” Several students asked questions to clarify what we mean, and this proved to be a generative theme for Emily and Logan, as well as for myself. I discuss this in more detail later in this chapter.

Session three focused on teaching the foundational capacities through the music practice. Students seemed to really like this practice and eagerly participated. Logan expressed wanting more opportunities to engage this practice during his exit interview. “I think it would be helpful to spend a little more time on dual listening, because we only did it for one class. I think dual listening, especially what the music’s talking about and what we are actually thinking are two different concepts. I do think that is very helpful...” Lauren also found the music practice helpful and enjoyable. “I really enjoyed when we listened to the music and you were talking about learning how to hear what was going on in it and separating that from what it was making you feel. That was, to me, a really profound lesson that I thought was a great way to show that.”

Session four focused on cultivating compassion for ourselves. Gabrielle raised an important question about unrepentant abusers. She seemed to be concerned about holding the other person accountable and did not see how compassion for ourselves did this. I explained that

compassion for ourselves is one movement in a larger practice, and that later steps would address her concerns. I also asked her to bring up this question again if she felt we did not address it.

Gabrielle also found the worksheet practice helpful:

I liked the reflections...in class that were guided, like with worksheets and things. I really liked those....the step by step process. At first, I thought this was stupid, draw your feelings, what is that? I hate that kind of thing usually [laughs]. Meditation, All of it. I don't know it's really frustrating to me. But then kind of feeling, not forced, forced is the wrong word, but invited to take the time and given the opportunity to take the time, and an opportunity where if you tune out and don't do it, what else are you going to do. It's the only productive use of your time because you're in class. So, I really appreciated that more so than the open-ended reflections for the homework.

Session five began with a discussion of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) assigned for homework at the end of session four. We had not anticipated such unsettling reactions to this test. Students were concerned about the meaning and implications of their results. Chris and I wanted to respond to the students' needs to unpack their test results, so we asked the students to get into their small groups. While they were gathering Chris quickly named and wrote on the whiteboard reflection questions for the small groups to discuss. We gathered afterward for plenary reflection in which it became clear that many of the white students were concerned about being racist. This precipitated an explanation of how we view racism structurally and systematically, rather than as individual pathology. From this session we realized the importance of the IAT for introducing internalized racial narratives. One small group, discussed in more detail later, engaged in a deep conversation about how white students were explaining away their results rather than reflecting on what those results might reveal about them.

Session six focused on cultivating compassion for others and involved the story pair practice in which students shared their earliest memory of race in dyads. Some students enjoyed this practice while others did not find it insightful. Danielle gained insight into her experience as a multi-racial woman, learning that other people experience similar problems:

I told her about am I black, am I white, am I Hispanic, am I Latino. I have no idea what my identity is. She was saying after the practice... 'Oh my god I'm experiencing the exact same things. I don't know what to do and it's super nice someone else is

experiencing that too'...I think that's super interesting. I don't want to say I'm selfish and only thinking about myself, but I didn't realize there's a bunch of other people who went through the exact same problems. I mean she was like yeah government documents I don't know what. I'm like oh my god government documents that's where I realized it too. So, it was super cool.

Rebecca had a different experience during this exercise. She was paired with Garrett and characterized her experience of this practice as follows:

I have no issue talking about my experiences as a black woman here. I do it every day. So, I just felt like I was helping my partner out cause he has never experienced or never had conversations like that before. I felt like I was helping him, but I didn't really get anything out of it. Just cause that's something that I do regularly and I'm already so accustomed to speaking to somebody whose not going to get it or is not going to resonate with them on as deep a level as it resonates with me. So, it's just kind of like going through the motions.

Overall, Chris and I thought the practice went well and students enjoyed it. Rebecca's experience, however, demonstrates the practice's dependence on the students involved in the dyad.

Chris was unable to attend the final session of ERAST due to prior commitments. I led session seven alone. We had given students a lot of information to process and I felt the need to make time for students to ask questions and clarify any sticking points for them. I lectured on discerning compassionate action but devoted a significant portion of the class to discussion. During this discussion one white student was having difficulty expressing her question, and I was experiencing difficulty understanding it. After trying to clarify her question, I grew concerned about spending too much time on one student's question, and that the students of color may feel that this was centralizing whiteness to their exclusion. One student of color passionately responded to her question. She was not reactive in her response from my perspective, but I felt that other students were receiving her comments as reactive or angry. I felt a definite sense of tension in the classroom. I did not know what to do in the moment. Upon reflection and discussion with Chris about this class I realized I missed an opportunity to re-ground the

classroom by asking the students to take the U-turn and assess their own level of reactivity, and to exercise the dual listening skills from the music practice.

I feel that this class was most beneficial for me, rather than the students. After class, I engaged in a lively discussion with several students of color who wanted to process the discussion further. Danielle describes her experience in this way, “even that class that you had where you only lectured for forty minutes and then we just had conversation. I feel like I learned so much from just listening from other people’s perspectives and stuff like that.” During his post-interview Garrett described his experience of the class as confusing and uncomfortable. “I remember, all I remember was leaving a little bit that day, a little bit confused. Like not completely sure. I think that was the only day I was a little bit uncomfortable to raise my hand, even though I don’t know if I was wanting to or not. Just cause I don’t know how whatever I would have asked or said would have sparked in the class.”

Compassion outcomes

1. Recognize and unblend with their emotions around race.

This is a crucial step in cultivating compassion and racial awareness. How do we feel when issues of race and racism arise? Being able to recognize our emotions as distinct and separate from our sense of self is essential for sustained efforts for racial justice, our own well-being, and engaged compassion. When we are enmeshed in an emotion we view the world through the lens of that emotion. Here I have provided pertinent examples of participants’ facility or understanding of this outcome measure.

Danielle offers an excellent example of how she has experimented with recognizing and unblending from her emotions in her own life. She also points out how the compassion practice has changed her approach to antagonizing comments:

My brain just feels lighter. I don't know it feels emptier. Stuff doesn't faze me as much...like I'm not gonna get mad easily...I feel like it (compassion practice) helps you avoid conflict too. People say stuff to me at volleyball, and I'm just like I let it go over my head cause I know if I...go back and forth with them it's not going to get us anywhere and it's just gonna waste our energy. Then I'm just going to be pissed off at that person and they're going to be pissed off at me. Whereas if I just don't say anything, it's just a random comment that happened and we're fine.

I don't know. It almost...feels better to just say your rude comebacks in your head and then not say them because then there's no repercussions for what you're thinking and then you don't feel bad. That's what I had a problem with was just sort of shooting low blows. Like, someone says something to me, [I respond] 'well you're ugly.' I'm like oh shit the next day. Oh my god I feel so bad. Now, I just don't say anything back. And obviously it was hard, but I've done it a couple of times and I like it. I feel like I get the last word even though I didn't get any words at all. I feel like I won the battle that doesn't exist. I feel good.

The following excerpt is from Emily's response to reading about racial formation. She writes about the importance of recognizing and unblending from one's emotions. She also outlines the process for cultivating awareness around internalized colorblind narratives. The implicit association test brought up a lot for Emily. It seemed to be a moment of awakening for her during the program:

I found the statement about the dominant belief in the United States as being "colorblindness" to be really interesting, because I agree with it. I think that many Americans like to believe that they are completely colorblind, and by claiming to be "colorblind," they push any preconceived notions, judgements, etc. away, rather than attempting to be honest with themselves and really understand why they feel the way they do. I think this is a really important thing to understand—that it is okay for us to have immediate pre-conceived notions and judgements regarding race (perhaps the way we are is just a product of our up-bringing), however, we need to be honest about how we actually feel, question and challenge why we do, and then make ourselves better. For example, I got the result that I have a strong automatic preference for white children as opposed to black children (which is unsettling to me because I did not believe this to be the case at all), however it is good to be aware of that, question why I may have reacted preferably toward the white children during the Implicit Bias test, and now I need to challenge myself to find the wisdom in this result and change it.

Gabrielle explains how the compassion practice has helped her name and understand her intuitive sense of needing to withdraw from conversations by taking the U-turn to reground:

I think one thing that the compassion practice has helped with is feeling like I have a backing for telling people in a heated conversation, actually you know I just need to remove myself, I can't talk about this right now... When I would do it [before] I would feel like, oh I'm withdrawing and I know this is the right thing to do, this is the responsible thing to do. It's the one that will promote the best relationship. And I think before I was framing it in my own head as evading conflict. So, removing myself as evasion, as separation, and I think that the compassion practice has helped me frame it as ultimately just hitting pause so that I can return to continuing to construct a relationship that is positive... I think that has been effective and helped me be able to articulate it as I want to foster a good relationship with you and I don't want to act in a reactive or impulsive way. I need time to do that. I want to give us both time, particularly me, just for me, to calm myself down so that I can have a constructive conversation with you... I feel like I did the U-turn. I didn't use that term, but now having the terminology has allowed me to articulate it more clearly to other people so they understand. Even if they haven't read the compassion practice, they understand why I'm doing the things that I'm choosing to do.

Lauren identifies the difficulty of hearing herself when strong emotions are present, and the importance of tending to those emotions for maintaining relationships:

It's difficult in the heat of the moment to stop and listen to your inner self when emotions are in the way. I've had a hard time distinguishing between separating myself from the emotion and completely rejecting the emotion all together, but I think that this distinction will be really helpful in my relationships with loved ones. I need to catch myself bottling emotions up and see that fear is stopping me from communicating.

I think that understanding and recognizing when I'm experiencing fear is important because it will help me realize that I am having emotions that are okay to have. I need to see that my emotions are a welcomed and important part of my experiences and interactions with others.

In the following excerpt, Garrett names the distinction between 'being' an emotion and 'feeling' an emotion. This is a key distinction that facilitates recognizing and unblending from one's emotions:

I normally describe myself as *being* angry, happy, excited rather than *feeling* or experiencing these emotions. I believe that differentiating the "being" and the "feeling" of emotions is a key step in overcoming difficult times when your emotions overwhelm you. In my own personal experience, simply telling yourself that it is simply a brief experience is the first step to returning to your "true self." This is important because it allows me to remain compassionate and carry myself in a positive manner.

2. Extend self-compassion to their emotions around race. Involves understanding of FLAG (fears, longings, aching wounds, gifts stifled), understanding the yearning for wholeness at the root of the interior movement, and restoring self-presence.

Extending compassion to oneself is a key step in the overall process of cultivating compassion for social change. Participants exemplified facilitation with this skill in various ways in their lives, and identified it as a helpful form of self-care. Burnout in social justice movements is common for people who do not take time for self-care. Rebecca emphasizes the importance aspects of self-care in her own journey as an activist:

Checking my PULSE and learning how to take a U-turn will help me to take the time to truly acknowledge what I feel inside, and hopefully help me to better articulate what it is I am experiencing rather than shutting down like I normally do. Those exercises reaffirmed that I have to tend to myself first before I tend to anyone else, which I have learned the hard way as a blossoming student activist. It is crucial to have balance in life but it is so easy to lose sight of that in such a tumultuous world. Part of being an activist is taking time for myself and my own personal development or well being. I read somewhere that if you do not take care of yourself during the movement, the work that you do is meaningless because it is not sustainable on an individual level. That is something that I have been focusing on this semester, and the compassion practice motivated me to really take it seriously, and also showed me how important it was to do that personal work. If I do not extend compassion to myself it would be impossible to extend compassion towards anyone else...I am very grateful because I feel reenergized to have these important conversations.

Being at this university I constantly feel that pressure to speak out because I know that most of the time no one else will. The worst part of it all is that it usually falls on deaf ears. This makes me resistant to extend compassion towards people who are ignorant to or insincere about acknowledging the struggles of students of color because I do not feel like they have compassion for me...I realize that my resistance stems from an unhealed wound and maybe even a threatened life need. My unhealed wound would be symbolized by feeling marginalized and neglected at this university and in the world, and a threatened life need would be to be treated with dignity and respect, but most importantly, to genuinely feel heard. It is more important than ever for me to hold myself with compassion because in the world we live in today, I may not always receive it from others.

Gabrielle also notes the role of the U-turn in self-care, and emphasizes the importance of taking time to tend to her interior movements:

ERAST's "U-turn" step was the most productive step for me, since it granted a space to practice self-care and not ignore the justified and important interior movements that I

experience in the face of injustice, and also allow myself time to attend to these interior movements instead of pushing myself to act when I am not yet ready.

Emily eloquently writes about the importance of being with an emotion for cultivating compassion:

This chapter on taking our own PULSE has been really helpful in teaching me how to approach overwhelming emotions, impulses, and thoughts. I found it really comforting to read about the gift that even an emotion such as anxiety can bring, if we welcome it and allow ourselves to be present *with* the anxiety, for example. I sometimes in day-to-day life become overwhelmed with self-hatred and judgement because I am a huge perfectionist and I focus on things that I don't like about myself often. For example, today, I am just not feeling 100% and I am self-conscious because I'm breaking out a lot, and I think my hair looks funky, but reading this chapter on inner voices has helped me immensely. These insecurities and judgements I make about myself just distance me from my true compassionate self. Rather than allowing these negative thoughts to consume me and define who I am, I need to make a U-turn and look for the root and core of these judgements. In my opinion, I am a huge perfectionist and I think this is just a good thing to know about myself. I need to consciously remind myself to not be so judgmental and critical of myself. This chapter has helped me a lot and I think it is really important for me to be more compassionate and "PULSE" for myself.

Lauren notes the importance of the U-turn for her during a frustrating class. Lauren's facility with the practice is quite adept as her in-the-moment engagement with it demonstrates:

I think the whole kind of U-turn looking at yourself with compassion is really helpful especially because I've noticed, at least recently, since we've been learning all this stuff that when I do feel overly frustrated at things that I kind of try to look at myself and say okay why are you getting so frustrated with this? Why are you allowing your emotions to take over the way that you're acting or feeling right now? It's been really helpful because I've been put in a lot of situations where I wanted to say things that I'm probably glad I didn't. For example, my humanitarian engineering class the other day, we were talking about activism and it was an interesting conversation and I didn't agree with what was being said. I felt myself in my seat wanting to scream, and not liking what people were saying about it. Instead, I kind of like took a step back and said okay maybe they haven't had good experiences with it and this is why they are saying things. And so, I tried to just provide an insight that hey maybe what you see is biased instead of saying no you're wrong or something like that. I'm hoping it was helpful in not creating a problem in class.

Garrett offers a significant reflection on compassion as a way of being in the world, as a way of life. His insight names the importance of embodying compassion rather than using it as a tool:

I have learned that compassion for oneself is much more important than I had previously thought. I thought that acting compassionate in the face of others was good enough, but now realize that the best way to resemble compassion to others is to be compassionate with yourself; being a living, breathing example of personified compassion rather than turning on a switch when it seems useful.

3. Extent to which they can have compassion for others in their views of race.

Compassion for others is a crucial part of creating social transformation. This step actively resists dehumanizing others by taking their PULSE. It is important to point out that compassion for others is not the same as agreeing with or condoning the compassionate other's behavior. This can be one of the most difficult moves in the process of cultivating compassionate actions. If one has not spent sufficient time cultivating compassion for themselves around an issue or person, they are likely to experience reactivity and become unable to effectively cultivate compassion for that issue or person.

Emily described a writing assignment in which she cultivated empathic understanding through imagining what it would be like to be African American on campus. This is an excellent example of creatively practicing the compassionate skills she has learned:

This class has inspired me in a lot of ways and just my view on the world. For my creative writing class that I'm taking right now our prompt this week was...a fictionalized memoir. Something you've been through but it's not you or you in a different situation. So, I tried to write about if I was black at this university...I was just inspired by this class to think about that. I don't think about that at all. I have the privilege to not think about that and honestly most of my classes it's pretty white across the board. So, I'm not even confronted with what would it be like. Sometimes I'll think about it. So, I was just reflecting throughout that paper too just how [pause] dehu – not dehumanizing – but just I feel like if I didn't see myself represented often in my classes or just walking around campus there would be such a contrast. I would feel it so strongly...

So that was just an interesting experience, like a really good experience I think. I specifically was just talking about the day after the election in my paper and how I felt. Not even on campus, but just how I felt that day, and trying to think of how I would feel if I was a person of color.

Emily has created an excellent practice for cultivating compassion for racialized others. She has given sustained and intentional time to imagining what it might be like for a student of

color on campus after the election. To use her words, this is a unique way of “PULSEing” for others, and demonstrates her understanding and facility cultivating compassion for others. In Emily’s final reflection paper on the program she named how the compassion practice helped her to humanize racist others:

The compassion practice has helped me find understanding in the root of others’ beliefs. When I focus on the three core insights that others are beloved by the universe, bear the pulse of humanity, and have complicated lives, I humanize others, despite their racial projects. In one of the readings, I learned about Martin Luther King Junior’s compassion when he put himself in a hateful racist man’s shoes and found compassion and understanding for the reasons why he may hold so strongly prejudiced beliefs and commit such racial projects. I strongly believe that one’s upbringing has a profound influence on one’s views on race and racism. With this understanding, I can view my classmate in the library with the Trump sticker differently—perhaps his beliefs are merely a result of his up-brining. Perhaps he was always told that immigrants, people of color, and women are of a lower class than himself. With this understanding, I can extend my compassion toward him. With that being said, there was wisdom in the anger and disillusionment I felt as a reaction of seeing his laptop sticker and I must tend to those emotions as well, but the compassion practice has helped me to not pass dehumanizing judgments about people who support someone that I strongly dislike.

Emily demonstrates excellent awareness of her own difficult emotions and how they were triggering her in this situation. She also understood the wisdom within them, which helped her to “not pass dehumanizing judgments about people.” Her experiences demonstrate a deep understanding and skilled application of the compassion practice for others in their views of race, and that compassion does not condone the racial views of others.

Lauren explains how the compassion practice helps her humanize others through recognizing their belovedness. The beloved, sacred core of every person is a foundational view from which the possibility of cultivating compassion is made possible:

This practice has taught me to see the belovedness in people I normally feel a lot of frustration towards. Since the class has started I have experienced many situations where I have felt my emotions wanting to take over the situation. I’ve noticed that there is a lot of ignorance surrounding divisive topics today, and that compassion is a useful tool not in solving these problems, but in creating a sense of self-awareness that allows us to look at our “enemies” and see the belovedness in them.

4. Extent to which they can have a generative conversation with others around race. This involves remaining grounded, speaking one's own truth, being able to hear the other, and feeling heard.

Generative conversations about race are possible when participants are grounded, able to speak their own truth, feel heard, and able to hear others. The following examples demonstrate participants' understanding of this importance or experiences of conversations where these capacities guided the conversation. During the post-interview, I asked Emily if she felt more prepared to have difficult conversations about race:

I feel like I will still need practice. Cause I still feel nervous about it I guess. It's funny because it depends on who I am talking to. With my roommates...I'm like oh you guys this is crazy, we talked about this and I want to tell them all about it. Then in our class, or in our groups, I'm more reserved because I am more nervous. I guess because my friends are white and they're my close friends. In class, I don't want to offend anyone by saying something or not thinking of something – I don't know. You know what I mean. Or not realizing privilege or something. But I do feel better equipped to, because of the practicing compassion, better equipped to talk about it if it did arise.

Later, Emily described how the compassion practice will help her talk about race:

I feel like this goes back to just being a product of your upbringing. So, if there's someone that I disagree with, or someone else is frustrated with, then it's important to realize where they come from. And I guess PULSE-ing for yourself and everything that you feel and the things that might surface, there's a reason. And it's probably pointing to something that you haven't tended to. So just to be aware if someone does say something that is really upsetting, there's a reason why and you should probably look inside to see that. Then understanding empathically too.

Lauren emphasizes the importance of feeling heard and deeply understood for having generative conversations with others. She also raises poignant questions about facilitating a U-turn in reactive conversation partners:

I also found extreme value in the exercise in which we listened to music in class. I had always thought about the difference between hearing people and listening to them when they speak. I always thought that one was physically hearing them, and the other was understanding and actively contributing to the conversation. I never considered that there is another important aspect to conversations with others. It was difficult for me at first because I always thought it was important to listen to others so that you can provide

insight they are blind to, but now I recognize that sometimes people just want to be heard, to be deeply understood without judgement or interjection. I found the related exercise where we distinguished what was musically happening from how it made us feel emotionally very profound.

I learned a lot about how to understand and manage my own emotions during this practice, but I wish we learned more about how to confront the emotions of another during arguments and conversations. Even when I am grounded, I can recognize when others are not grounded in arguments or during difficult conversations. It may be easy to say to that person to take their time to ground their emotions before the discussion continues, but what happens when it is not that easy? I recognize that it is difficult to control someone else's emotions, but I think there may be a way to facilitate a U-turn in another person without causing more distress.

Rebecca's experiences reflect the complexity of being black (how she self-identified) on a predominantly white campus. The following excerpts convey what she has learned about creating spaces for generative conversations, particularly with white people, *and* how little she experiences those spaces as a black woman. In this excerpt, Rebecca emphasizes crucial aspects of cultivating compassion for others, maintaining a non-judgmental stance and an openness to understanding:

Trying not to be automatically frustrated with people who don't understand or are missing the mark and trying to empathize with them and if they're not familiar with [race]. It's not on them which I have pretty much always done. But be more mindful of that and really taking that into consideration and hearing people out even though I don't want to if they're not saying anything that I don't want to hear. If they're trying, to give them more credit because I realize that it is harder to have conversations about race if you've never been exposed to it. I don't know what that is so I can't assume that they're dumb, which I don't, or assume that they don't know what they're talking about, or they just don't care to get it. It actually is much harder than what I will ever know. So, really being mindful of that, because it's not always their fault. I can't blame somebody for not knowing if that's not their reality, if that's not their experience, if that's not what they have been exposed to. It's not fully on them. I feel like that's the number one take away.

Rebecca adds to this an important component of accountability. Extending compassion to others with differing racial understandings does not absolve them of responsibility, or the consequences of those views. I asked her what actions she would take to create a non-judgmental space for someone that's just starting to deal with these issues:

I guess by verbally affirming them that it's not a hundred percent on them, but also I would still hold them accountable too. You still have to be open and willing to learn and to hear different perspectives. Making sure that they feel affirmed in some way, that I'm not attacking them or I'm not looking down on them cause they don't understand something.

The next excerpt is taken from Rebecca's reflections on the story-pair practice. Her experience demonstrates the necessity of maintaining each quality of a generative conversation (because of their absence). In this instance, the quality of feeling heard was absent. Rebecca also points out this is a normative experience for her on campus:

Rebecca: ...I have no issue talking about my experiences as a black woman here. I do it every day. So, I just felt like I was helping my partner out cause he has never experienced or never had conversations like that before. So, I felt like I was helping him, but I didn't really get anything out of it...

Seth: ...What would you have wanted to get from your partner?

Rebecca: Somebody to genuinely get it, which would not happen unless I'm talking to one of my friends or somebody has a similar experience to me... They don't have to be black but somebody to truly understand or that can relate on some level, instead of, 'oh wow I never thought of it that way.' Cause that's how it ended... I have no issue but it was like yeah this is the same stuff I experience every day.

Seth: What are the things that help you feel heard and feel got?

R: [pause] I don't think I know. I don't think there's very – there hasn't been very many moments where I feel heard. So, it was hard for me to decipher that. I don't know. I can't give a concrete example, I would just have to feel it.

S: I'm just curious cause you're identifying most of the time you don't feel that way. So I'm really curious as to what helps you feel heard.

R: Talking to somebody where...[pause]...I don't know. Not that they have to know exactly what I'm talking about. The conversation I had with you last week, you didn't know what was going on fully, but it was still a very genuine conversation. I had no issue having that conversation with you cause it actually helped me.

S: Oh okay. Me too.

R: I don't know. I've never even thought of it. Cause I pretty much just go through [assuming] it's not gonna happen so I just resonate with myself, affirm myself.

S: What I'm hearing is that there might be part of you that is...[pause]...it assumes you're never going to be heard.

R: Here yeah. [at the university]

S: Okay. [pause]. That's a lot to think about.

R: I mean at this point I'm over – like it doesn't affect me. I'm not sad over it, I'm just ready to graduate and move on...It sounded really dark just now, but I've just accepted it.

Rebecca's final comments demonstrate the necessity and urgency of programs like ERAST that create spaces where people feel heard, and can speak their own truth. While Rebecca did not experience this during the story pair exercise, she did experience it in conversations with me. Additionally, Rebecca was so moved by our work that she invited us to lead a workshop at a student lead conference she co-designed.

Race outcomes

5. Race is core to our identity

This is a foundational reality for life in the United States. Omi and Winant assert that race is a fully formed social fact, like gender [Omi and Winant].⁸ They also show that race is “a fundamental concept that has profoundly shaped, and continues to shape, the history, polity, economic structure, and culture of the United States.”⁹ Race is an inherent component of how we make sense of the world around us. Given the centrality of racial identity, I included it as an outcome measure. Evidence was coded in this way if participants explicitly described the importance of their racial identity, described significant experiences that related to race, or expressed intellectual awareness of race as foundational to identity. Participants tended to understand this reality differently, as one's racialization dramatically affects one's understanding

⁸ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation*, 137.

⁹Omi and Winant, 106-109.

of how race structures identity. Some participants began our program with a deep awareness of this reality. For those participants, their racial identity did not change much. For example,

Rebecca conveyed a deep awareness of her identity as black during the pre-interview:

Rebecca: I'm Black. I feel like that's all I know. I guess I could say African American, but I personally feel like that's a lot to say. I feel like when people say that they're over – it depends on the context but they're over compensating. They're trying to be polite. But it's like I'm black.

Seth: Are there any other aspects of your identity that are important to you?

Rebecca: I'm a black woman. But with any of my other identities I feel like black comes first because when you see me that's what you see. So, regarding my experience, I experience things as black then everything else. I feel like black is the dominant identity. That's the default because that's just how the world works.

Rebecca offered the following written reflection on the importance of her racial identity as a platform for resistance:

My favorite part of the reading was the point about race also being a platform for resistance. This resonated with me the most because I take pride in my racial identity. Yes, it is a social construct, but it is such a key part of me that I will always be proud to claim. Racial classification can also be a platform for reclaiming your racial identity and using that as empowerment and motivation to fight for the dignity and respect you deserve as a person of color that is constantly marginalized in some way or another.

Emily explains how her racial self-understanding has changed during the program. She also points out an important, but sometimes overlooked, aspect of racial awareness; it is an empowering process:

I think maybe just being more aware of how privileged I am. I think that's a big thing. [pause] I don't know if it's because of this class but recently if my friends make little jokes about being Asian or something that bothers me more now. So, I guess, maybe being more aware of just other people perpetuating – not like it's a big racial project or anything but bringing attention to that it frustrates me.

It's really empowering that everyone of us has responsibility to not commit racial projects and to be aware. Just because you're not outwardly racist that doesn't mean that you're not perpetuating racism. I think that's something that's new to my understanding of race and I think that's really cool.

In the following excerpt Lauren explains how her racial self-understanding has become more expansive. She connects her racial identity to social structures:

Before I was really struggling with knowing and understanding was this a race. Or my place within a race I guess. But now it's kind of like, okay what can I do to help create a world where that isn't an issue? ...I think before I was asking more, what is my race and things like that. Now I'm wondering more how does that play a part in society in a more general sense? Before I was worried about for me, who am I? What does this make me? Now I'm thinking more of okay identifying a certain way how is that facilitated in society and what do I need to do to make it better? You know where race isn't the first identifying question for most people. I'm recognizing that yeah when you see something the first thing you think about is what is your race or you see someone who you can't really tell and you're trying to identify what they are. So, I think it's definitely made me think about it in a more broad sense rather than just looking at myself and thinking about how it affects me.

Garrett entered the program with an honest desire to learn, but little education about race. The following excerpt shows that Garrett's understanding of race is largely dominated by colorblind narratives:

Seth: How do you see yourself racially? Has that changed at all?

Garrett: No, besides the fact that I don't want to categorize myself as a white person. I don't want that to be what defines me, just like I don't want to define someone else by being black, or Hispanic, or Latin or something like that. I don't want to define myself. Personally, I want to define myself by something besides race. So, I guess I took that away from the class. Whereas before hand I'm just an average white guy you know what I mean? Now I don't want to use average white guy to describe myself.

Seth: And that's something you got out of the class?

Garrett: yeah.

S: Okay. Could you say more about that? What's changed? Why don't you want to identify yourself that way anymore?

G: I didn't really explain it, but I don't want to distinguish people by race because I think it's unfair. I don't think it's a fair grouping. You know what I mean? As humans, we categorize things to make things easier for our brains/students [unclear] to talk about in that class. But I don't think race is something that necessarily - maybe in the past if it started out well categorizing people by race. I just don't see it like - the way we've

handled race up until now I don't want to categorize myself in a race. I feel like we shouldn't - I don't know, I'm having trouble with these questions.

During this portion of the interview I was trying to understand more deeply what Garrett meant by not wanting to categorize people by race. At first it very much seemed as if Garrett had missed key learning goals of our program. He seems to have synthesized Colorblindness with our teachings. This excerpt demonstrates the deeply embedded nature of colorblind narratives. I think Garrett has realized that people are categorized unfairly based on race, but his conclusion to cease categorizing reflects an entrenched colorblind perspective. It seems to rest on the assumption that we get to define who we are. My conclusion is that Garrett does not yet fully understand that race is a core part of our identity, and therefore cannot simply be dismissed. Later, Garrett nuances his views more.

6. Race is core in every dimension of society and human relationships.

Race permeates and influences every dimension of society, including social relationships. I think it is crucial to investigate how large structural dynamics of race affect society at the macro level and manifest between and among individuals and social relationships. It is important that our program foster this awareness in participants intellectually, and experientially.

During Danielle's post-interview I asked how her racial self-understanding has changed. Her response indicates the complexity of understanding her multi-racial identity in the context of various social groups. Danielle's comments also reveal the interconnected nature of her racial identity. Her own racial identity is partially formed through relationships with others, as well as through her own sense of herself:

Danielle: It's still the same to me, but the whole implicit bias test has me feeling some type of way I'm thinking. As I said, my black friends are telling me I'm white. Okay, my white friends are telling me I'm black, so there's one vote for black. Then my black friends are telling me I'm white, so there's one vote for white. A study told me I'm white, so I'm

thinking leaning more toward the white side, but my heart still goes to the black. But apparently my unconscious mind is going to the white so I might have to follow the unconscious. I feel like I'm just – I don't want to say because I'm black I feel like I'm supposed to advocate - see I'm calling myself black when I'm with you - advocate for black people I guess. Maybe that's what I'm doing without realizing it, as I said, overcompensating cause it [implicit bias test] said I had a preference for white people.

Seth: You seem to feel like you have to be one or the other?

Danielle: Yeah.

Seth: The social groups you travel in, do they put you in those groups?

D: Yeah. If I'm with black people...The thing is if I'm with white and black people that's when it's like... The whole intersectionality thing just has my brain going bonkers so I don't really know. I feel like I'm on the right side of intersectionality in the sense that I'm Catholic and I go to a private school. But I feel like a lot of other things, like being black or something like that might not be the best mix in those, [another thought seemed to interrupt her here] but I'm definitely not white. Like I know I'm not white I look...I don't know.

Emily drew a unique connection between race as a signifier of social conflicts and internal movements as signs of something crying out for help within us:

The point that the author makes that “race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” reminds me of our practicing compassion readings. For instance, the belief that internal movements are just signs of something deeper, something crying out for help, is applicable to this explanation of race: like the interior movements, the concept of race is the result of social conflicts and interests that underlay our society!

Emily's insight helped shift how Chris and I view race and racism in the context of the Compassion Practice. We had been struggling with how to understand whiteness. Emily's reflections helped us conceptualize whiteness as an internal movement within our inner worlds.

Gabrielle talked about the impact of seeing interracial facilitators. She identified our friendship as an important part of being interracial facilitators. The authenticity and depth of our friendship positively influenced her learning. Through our friendship she learned key goals; namely that race can be a core part of relationships in a positive way, rather than oppressive:

When you were talking, Dr. Carter was listening to what you had to say, and remembering things that you didn't mention and so as I said earlier knowing that a white person is for real. Then [pause] just kind of having a model. Like, no a white person can be a good ally to a black person and still go through this implicit bias stuff and not have that completely ruin their relationship, and they talk about it. Just knowing that that happens and that is possible is encouraging to know that it's not just a professional relationship, but that those types of personal relationships can work out.

Oh! and then also the fact that you two are very close friends, helps. So when he would talk about his experience, and you would kind of say...you know as a white person I would not have done X,Y,Z or I would not have thought of X,Y, and Z. Like the dressing up kind of thing. I think that if you were not friends, that kind of intellectualizing of a person of color's experience would rub me the wrong way. Kind of like, ahh I see how this fits into CRT in these four ways, so I can demonstrate that I know that I'm book smart about race. That's different because you're not just intellectualizing it. It's showing how to integrate intellectual information in a personal way and integrate it into personal relationships and daily life. So that would not have worked if you were just professionally linked. Yeah.

The following excerpt shows that Garrett is beginning to grasp that race is a core dimension of society. It also demonstrates his growing concern about how to address racial inequality:

Garrett: I feel like we just put such negative connotations on race in general that I would just like to stop. I don't think we can kind of flip around and go back to continuing to categorize people on race after we've done that and seen people in a negative light and then treated them that way, and then try to flip around completely. I don't see it possible to be honest.

Seth: To stop categorizing based on race. Is that what you're saying?

Garrett: I don't want to categorize people on race because of how we've categorized people on race, but I also don't see it possible.

Seth: So, what I'm hearing is that it sounds like you are seeing some of the problems with how racial categorization works...

G: yes.

S: And that's led to a lot of oppression.

G: Yes.

S: okay. Is it important to understand how we are raced? How those categories work?

G: I think it is to understand the oppression that people have gone through. I think you need an understanding to understand what people have gone through, maybe not in this generation, but what their ancestors have gone through and how they are affected by that now. So, I think you need an understanding. Because like beforehand, before this class, before college, I don't know we talked about in class about how people and minorities get scholarships and stuff like that. I'd be like oh that's not fair they get a scholarship. You know what I mean? But that was more of a misunderstanding on my part. I wasn't understanding why they were getting scholarships or why they were doing this. Kind of as I became more educated and as I got to reflect in this class on my education, and my personal beliefs. Reading the book and going through the practices I was kind of able to perform different beliefs as well, or add on to beliefs.

S: So now how would you understand the scholarship situation? Now after taking this class.

G: I understand it as not trying to make up for the past but trying to enable someone that you've dug a hole for and put them in. Now you're trying to make – and I still don't see it as putting them back up on level playing field. I kind of see it as here's a couple steps. Now go do it for yourself.

What I really struggle with is all these terrible oppressions have happened in the past and now we're trying to make up for it kind of, now and in the future. I really feel we're not doing a good job, because no one knows what to compensate. You know what I mean. I'm not saying scholarships are a bad thing. I've been pondering this this whole time. What can we do to basically level the playing field? Get them back on their feet you know. Make it so there's not such a gap between us. So, that's one of the biggest questions that have come out of this class.

7. Our racial identities are socially constructed.

During the story pair practice Danielle realized other people with multi-racial identities have similar experiences. I see this as a moment where Danielle is realizing the socially constructed nature of race through the shared lived experience of multi-racial identity. Her story also exemplifies a generative conversation in which both participants were grounded, able to speak their truth, and where they both felt heard:

I told [my conversation partner] about am I black, am I white, am I Hispanic, am I Latino. I have no idea what my identity is. She was saying after the practice, after class ended...She was like oh my god I'm experiencing the exact same things. I don't know what to do and it's super nice someone else is experiencing that too. We even spoke more about it today. I think that's super interesting. I don't want to say I'm selfish and only thinking about myself, but I didn't realize there's a bunch of other people who went

through the exact same problems. I mean she was like yeah government documents I don't know what. I'm like oh my god government documents that's where I realized it too. So, it was super cool.

Gabrielle entered the program with a deep understanding of the social construction of race. During the program she reflected on how this applies to her personally. She offered the following comments during the post-interview:

I have been thinking about what I wrote on that piece of paper [demographic data form] the first time we had this interview. And I'm thinking now, you asked race and you asked ethnicity. I think in that order. When I was filling it out I just anticipated it being you list race and then there's no question for ethnicity or you list ethnicity and there's no question for race. I think I wrote under race mixed race Vietnamese white or Asian white or something. I don't remember. Ever since writing that down, I've just been thinking maybe on an every other day basis if race is how people read you, how do people read me? And then being in a different context, contacting people over email where they haven't met me and all they see is my first and last name and they don't see my middle name. [short pause] I can be read as white. But then at this university, and its tricky cause I don't know if people, like how people read my race. But then how people do end up treating me, I feel like when I notice how people treat me in a racialized way it's Asian. Not mixed race, not white, people treat me as Asian. So, I'm thinking should I look back at what I wrote and change it? But then also when I go home where there's mostly Asian people, I feel like I'm treated as mixed race Asian white. There's a different status associated with that. And so I'm thinking of whose – that description I assume is going to be paired with an anonymous name for me, like a character name, to kind of allow the audience to get a sense of how I live my life or how my life has been lived – the audience because if the audience thinks that I'm Asian that makes sense if they're a white audience who would read me as Asian. It doesn't make as much sense if they're an audience that would recognize the kind of distinct status that mixed race Asian white people have in Asian communities. So, I've just been thinking about my own race a little bit more, how I come off to people, to different audiences, and how I describe myself racially to different audiences, and how much detail I provide. [laughs] I've just been thinking about that.

This is an excellent example of how our bodies are made up racially. Gabrielle has begun thinking about how people read her racially in various contexts. She has taken the theoretical knowledge that race is part of how we read people and understood it in the context of her own life experience. This is an important awareness ERAST seeks to cultivate.

8. Racism exists. Persons are treated differently by virtue of race.

Unconscious racism, such as implicit bias, is the dominant form of racism today, and present the greatest difficulty for anti-racist efforts. This section focuses on one small group's response to the Implicit Association Test (IAT). Danielle, Emily, Rebecca, and Garrett participated in a small group discussion after taking the IAT. This discussion illustrates how they understood their results, and how white supremacy narratives were employed to explain away unfavorable results. It may be helpful to refer to table 1 for reference to participants' racial self-identification.

Danielle and Emily both exhibited a bias toward European American faces. Rebecca exhibited a bias toward African American faces. Garrett's results were heavily skewed by the manner in which he engaged the test. Danielle commented during her post-interview, '[Garrett] was like yeah, you just time your clicks and you're gonna be completely not racist.' During plenary discussion Garrett indicated similar views. The test is most accurate when taken in good faith according to the instructions. By timing his clicks, Garrett did not properly follow these instructions. Nevertheless, he assumed the results to be accurate, and understood them to mean he was not racist.

Danielle and Emily, during the small group discussion, questioned the validity and accuracy of the IAT. Rebecca summed up this discussion during her post-interview. "So, we were talking and they kept saying, 'well I'm just a patterns person, that's just how I think so I don't think I'm racist, but when it switched I just got confused because I already had the pattern.' That's what they kept saying. Every single one of them said it. 'Yeah, it just threw me off because I was confused about the pattern.'"

Rebecca went on to explain that she had not experienced similar confusion by the patterns:

I was like look when it switched, when the patterns – I'm a patterns person too – when it switched to black kids and good words I did not skip a beat. It was the fastest that I've

ever been through. I didn't skip a beat. I know for a fact that I wasn't going to. I literally told myself I better not mess up any of these things. So clearly it was my bias. And they don't want to acknowledge that [their own bias] ...Let's just be honest about it. It's not because of the pattern, that's the point. You're biased. That's fine, it doesn't say anything about – it might say something about - your character but that doesn't mean you're a bad person because you have bias based on your experience.

This group discussion provides an example of how whiteness continually reasserts itself. Rather than accept the results and how they might impact their self-understanding, Danielle and Emily initially attempted to find fault with the test itself. Garrett, while expressing no concerns about the test's validity, manipulated the test to receive the results he wanted.

Despite initial resistance, with the insight of Rebecca and our class discussion Emily and Danielle both continued to wrestle with their test results and the impact on their racial sense of self. Danielle expressed uncertainty about her own multi-racial identity:

Clearly there's something about what I did that gave me preference. So, that was like oh shoot if I have preference for white then am I more white now than black? I totally thought I was going to have [preference] for black. Then when I had [preference for] white I thought am I more white than I think I am? Like, I have implicit biases toward them. I am still questioning the legitimacy, but I'd say that I'm...it's just hard to come to terms with that.

Emily focused on how the compassion practice could help her understand the results of the IAT. She wrote the following in her reflection paper after taking the IAT:

I got the result that I have a strong automatic preference for white children as opposed to black children (which is unsettling to me because I did not believe this to be the case at all), however it is good to be aware of that, question why I may have reacted preferably toward the white children during the Implicit Bias test, and now I need to challenge myself to find the wisdom in this result and change it.

Garrett did not offer further reflection on the IAT in any of his written data, or during the post-interview. I did not explicitly ask about the IAT during post-interviews.

The candid and honest reflections of Danielle and Emily are excellent examples of the kind of inner work that is crucial for racial justice. An important goal of our program asks

participants to begin understanding how structural dynamics of race manifest within themselves. Rather than understanding the structural dynamics of race as existing only ‘out there’ in the world, Danielle and Emily have begun the process of understanding how those racial structures exist within them, and how they influence their perception of reality.

9. Do they feel equipped and committed to actions to transform racism? Both inner and outer actions.

Some participants entered the program with a commitment to racial justice. For these students, the program deepened that commitment. Participants who showed no such commitment did seem to exhibit a desire to address racism in some way. This section focuses on actions, broadly construed, participants would like to take moving forward.

Laruen explains how her thinking has become more expansive, and identifies questions that have been raised for her during the program:

I think before I was asking more what is my race and things like that. Now I’m wondering more how does that play a part in society in a more general sense? Before, I was worried about for me. Who am I? What does this make me? Now, I’m thinking more of like, okay identifying a certain way how is that facilitated in society and what do I need to do to make it better? ...Where race isn’t the first identifying question for most people. I’m recognizing that yeah when you see something the first thing you think about is what is your race, or you see someone who you can’t really tell and you’re trying to identify what they are. So, I think it’s definitely made me think about it in a more broad sense rather than just looking at myself and thinking about how it affects me.

Lauren goes on to explain how the compassion practice will help her begin addressing these questions:

I feel like maybe there’s a lot of opposition within the idea of race itself. There’s one side and another. I feel like the compassion practice is really helpful in understanding that it doesn’t need to be two sides because we are all human beings that have this equal – what it talked about [in the book] – sacredness and belovedness, where it doesn’t need to be one or the other. I feel like that’s really necessary in that.

Garrett began the program with relatively little racial education. During the pre-interview he described learning that it was okay for a black student union to exist but not a white student

union. However, he could not explain why that was okay. Through the interviews and written material, it is clear that he engaged the course with the intent to learn something new and potentially uncomfortable for him. During the post-interview Garrett conveyed a desire to ‘level the playing field,’ and ‘make it so there’s not such a gap between us:’

Ideally that’s what I would like to happen, but I’ve been thinking about how you can do that. I thought about the education system, maybe bringing the idea of race into education sooner, because I also wrote in another post how I wasn’t aware of race the way I am now until recently. I would say in the past four years I realized people were of different skin and of different cultures, different skin tones, and different cultures. But I didn’t have a real understanding of maybe the differences of our places in this country, and stuff like that. I’ve been really thinking about that. It’s been bugging me. I’m gonna ponder it for a while.

When I asked if he felt called to take action in some way he responded:

I do. I don’t know what the action is though. But I feel, like I said earlier, me myself just acting the way I am toward other people isn’t enough. It isn’t enough. I think maybe the first step for me would be to kind of put my friends back home in check. Growing up in high school we talked about how I only had...I went to this really small high school. In my graduating class maybe 10 African American kids, maybe. And then we hung out with some African American friends. Jokes were thrown around that were very inappropriate and they just kind of had to take it you know. Cause they were the minority and they just kinda had to take it. They never really showed it or I didn’t see them feeling any emotion towards it. But I’m not comfortable with those types of jokes or those types of conversations now myself, regardless of whose around. I just don’t find it funny. I just find it degrading.

I then asked Garrett how he might address the situation at home in light of what he has learned in our program:

I would just call them out...I would just call them and be like hey what are you doing. Think about what you’re saying. I would try to make them realize – cause most people, at least what I get is that most people are trying to be funny. It’s not funny. I need to make them, not make them realize, but I need to show them I don’t think it’s funny. Maybe they should try another joke or a different category or something like that. I don’t know. I don’t know I really see the problem with people from my hometown now, and the types of things that are said down there. I don’t know. Just a lot different. I’ve become more aware of what I’ve grown up around and stuff like that. It’s kind of crazy.

Garrett expressed his call to action in his final reflection paper as follows:

I am happy with where I am with race now, on a personal level, but am not content with how far I have come. There is an urge inside of me to do something more, to better the lives of others that have been affected by racial tensions and acts of discrimination both past and present. I am not sure what exactly that is yet, but I am convinced that seeking a further sense of inner compassion will lead me to that calling.

In this excerpt, Garrett shows an awakening to the deeper issues of race and his call to action. I think it is indicative of one kind of action white people need to take. He has identified one action that will break the silence that exists amongst his friends when racist jokes are made. This is the kind of discomfort that needs to be introduced into white environments. While it may be a comparatively modest effort, for Garrett it is an authentic, genuine, and transformative action that he has discerned for himself. For these reasons, I think Garrett is more likely to take these small actions for racial justice.

Emily also expressed a desire to educate her white friends about what she had learned about race:

I feel like even just how I want to tell my roommates and my boyfriend, ‘you guys you need to be aware, have you ever thought about how race is just not an innate thing?’ I’ve talked to them about that, so I guess that in itself is like – I don’t know. Cause I feel like people don’t think about it, especially at this university. Just realizing what other people have to go through, like Dr. Carter and people in our class. To make sure that I never perpetuate any of those things...And then just moving on with the awareness of implicit bias too. Being very cognizant of that moving forward.

Logan experienced a significant transformation during the program. He characterized his views of racial conversations prior to the program as, “kind of boring talk at the table.” He also indicated that many Asians do not participate in protests and consider them a waste of time because of the influence of Confucianism. During the post-interview Logan’s views had shifted dramatically. Regarding conversations about race, Logan expressed understanding their importance:

Now I realize that it's something that we always need to - it is good to talk about. Not something like 'ah it's race again.' But it is something important to talk about to share about, share different opinions at the table.

He also indicated an interest in participating in anti-racist social movements:

I think I would probably in the future I would participate more in this type of social movement...At least I know it is important to do some anti-racism project because it is good for everyone, not just for African Americans, but also for every minority group.

In his final reflection paper Logan expressed interest in participating in a protest or march, "I will feel more comfortable to join a protest or a march in the future, so the system can be less racist. Protest is a form of anti-racist project and it is necessary to make a better society."

Rebecca identified self-care as an important action that will enable her to engage in productive conversations, and sustain her activist efforts:

I want to take care of me first, and acknowledge the fact – this semester I'm taking a step back from all of my activism work. I'm still an activist every single day walking on this campus, but really allowing myself to take that break because I was really, really burnt out. I feel like all of our work goes unnoticed and unappreciated. So, after doing this [program] it reaffirms me focusing on me and taking the time for myself and really having a conversation with myself about how I'm feeling and how these things are affecting me. Then going from there. Prioritizing me, because if I don't then I'm not going to be able to have productive conversations. I'm just going to be angry, and I'm not going to be able to get my point across or move forward. I'm just going to be stuck in that initial emotion I'm feeling.

In her final reflection paper of the program, Rebecca re-emphasized the importance of self-care and identified how the compassion practice has helped her engage that action:

Part of being an activist is taking time for myself and my own personal development or well-being. I read somewhere that if you do not take care of yourself during the movement, the work that you do is meaningless because it is not sustainable on an individual level. That is something that I have been focusing on this semester, and the compassion practice motivated me to really take it seriously, and also showed me how important it was to do that personal work.

In Vivo Codes

During analysis four in vivo codes emerged from the data. The importance of sharing stories, dual listening, sense of the sacred, and interracial facilitator impact were important themes for

participants. Coding the data with these four codes allowed for an in depth understanding of what they contribute to the program, and what participants found difficult.

1. Importance of sharing stories

The impact of stories was not an initial focus of this study. We understood that narrative is a powerful teaching tool and incorporated personal stories into our pedagogy. From our own experience we thought they would be impactful. During coding, it became clear that our stories were an important part of how participants made sense of what they were learning. Our own personal experiences with the skills we were teaching lent credibility to their efficacy and deepened participants' understanding of how to apply them to their own lives. For example, Gabrielle appreciated the realism that our personal experiences brought to the practices. "I like the examples for your lives because it made it so that it seemed less hokey, seemed less like this always works for everyone, but we're not going to tell you how specifically."

Lauren found our personal stories helpful for understanding her own experiences. "I didn't think that writing things for myself and trying to understand them in my own head would give me the perspective I needed to understand what I was saying. But, when I heard the examples provided by both Dr. Carter and Professor Schoen, I knew how I could apply their reflection to my own experiences."

Rebecca commented on the importance of incorporating our life experiences. "I really enjoyed it because you guys both told stories. I really like real life examples...It felt very personal and...I didn't feel like I was being lectured at, I felt like we were having a genuine conversation where we all were learning together. I feel like that was more helpful than being like, 'okay this is how you can be compassionate toward somebody.' Whereas you were incorporating real life experiences and your journey throughout. So, I appreciated that."

Emily wrote about how our stories facilitated her learning:

Although the readings were necessary in order to be prepared for a good discussion, I most enjoyed our class discussions because Dr. Carter and Professor Schoen were able to elaborate on and further explain parts of the readings that I found to be difficult to understand. I really enjoyed hearing their lived examples as well because I found them relatable sometimes, which aided in my understanding. Something that stuck out to me a lot and will continue to stay in my mind is how Dr. Carter is often mistaken as a student at this university and therefore dresses formally so that people take him more seriously. This really made me reflect on my privilege. Furthermore, Professor Schoen's solidarity in dressing formally too for Dr. Carter was really moving to me.

Our personal narrative pedagogy was clearly beneficial to participants and will be incorporated as a core component of our approach.

2. Sense of the sacred

The research process gave rise to unforeseen areas of rich exploration. For example, confusion and interest arose around 'sensing the sacred' step of PULSE. Several students were confused by this movement of the Compassion Practice and needed more time exploring and clarifying how to understand the term 'sacred.' We had not anticipated this line of questioning and addressed it as best we could in the moment. Indeed, students' perceptions of the sacred came to occupy much of my own thoughts and reflections. As an indigenous practitioner of Christianity, I had taken this crucial movement of the Compassion Practice for granted. Their questions helped me realize that 'sensing the sacred' assumes a theological orientation they did not share. The compassion practice is partly based in the Christian tradition of Ignatian spiritual practices, and my conception of the sacred was formed as an integral aspect of my identity as a Christian. However, our experience has taught us that the Compassion Practice appeals to wider audiences than Christians. In a sense, the Compassion Practice, in its capacity to cultivate compassion, is larger than Christianity. As I teach more audiences about the Compassion Practice, I am persuaded that this practice is limited by theological language in certain contexts.

One of the crucial and ongoing goals is to articulate the Compassion Practice to non-Christian audiences in a way that respects the tradition it grew out of but does not subtly proselytize those audiences. Compassion is broader than Christianity, but the Compassion Practice offers a unique way of cultivating compassion not found in other approaches. As in the hymn of compassion, this does not imply ‘better.’ Rather, the Compassion Practice offers one more voice to the hymn.

During the exit interviews, I explored participants’ concept of the sacred further. My goal was to gain a deeper understanding of their views and to help chart a course for how we can clarify this crucial component in future programs. I created a ‘sense of sacred’ code to further explore this topic during data analysis. For many students ‘sensing the sacred’ was an obfuscating term. Emily characterized her initial understanding of sacred as follows:

I feel like right off the bat I wouldn’t know what that means or how to think about that, and...because you don’t understand it, it’s off putting because you’re like oh I don’t know what that means. I don’t know what you’re talking about. So, maybe just a more general word would be better.

As the interview continued we engaged in a fascinating discussion of what the sacred might mean to her as someone who identifies as atheist (from the demographic form: don’t believe in God...atheist?). I emphasized the importance of naming the sacred in her own words and how that would contribute greatly to our work. She explained her understanding of a sacred moment in this way:

Emily: Just that feeling that you’re really small in the grand scheme of things. Maybe it’s opposite though, with sacredness, because you feel connected to a higher – if that’s what it means in religious terms – you feel connected to something bigger. Sometimes in nature you just feel like wow I’m nothing and that’s fine. Then everything’s huge and I am just little and I’m gonna be gone in less than a hundred years and never come back again. This will all continue, though, but I’m just a little person. That feeling.

Seth: Could you name some of those feelings?

Emily: Just like almost scared a little bit, but in a good way. Awe struck and inspired and grateful.

Logan also experienced difficulty understanding the sacred. “Sensing the sacredness, that was difficult for us especially [because] I didn’t grow up with a...religion background at all. I think that’s what makes it difficult.” Later in the interview Logan provided a description of how he understands sensing the sacred, and his confusion with the reading.

Sensing the sacred is in my opinion, at least from the book, is trying to connect with other people. Isn’t it? But the point is when he is saying sensing sacredness, what does sacredness mean? When you sense the sacredness how do you know it is sacredness? I think it is very abstract. He doesn’t have any particular description of what is sacredness. So, I think that’s why it is so confusing to me.

Both Emily and Logan offer crucial insights for addressing non-religious audiences around the concept of sensing the sacred. This proved a generative theme for me and occupied much of my thought. I wanted to find a way to convey what we meant in terms that were meaningful to them. I was unable to resolve this confusion by the end of the program, unfortunately.

Emily’s description of the sacred as “feeling connected to something bigger” reflects an important aspect of my understanding. Based on her explanation during the post-interview, Emily understood this concept. However, it is also clear that we did not affirm her understanding during the program. Logan identified connecting with other people as part of the sacred. This, too, reflects my understanding. He also names a key dynamic of sensing the sacred. How do you know when you have sensed it? This points to the experiential nature of sensing the sacred. While it can be grasped intellectually, it is most fully understood through embodied experiences that combine intellectual and experiential knowledge with deep reflection.

I found particularly salient descriptions of the sacred in non-religious terms in astronauts describing their experience of being on the moon and looking back at earth. After watching several astronauts explain these experiences I started to realize their descriptions mirrored the

way mystics describe their deepest experiences with God. Their descriptions also resonated with some of my experiences during meditation. Then it dawned on me. Astronauts have physically experienced what mystics experienced internally. They were seeing the world as interconnected from an *actual* third person perspective. They were physically awestruck at the sight of their smallness in the grandeur of the universe. These are the experiences I need to draw on as part of how to explain the sacred to non-religious people. Perhaps the best way to explain the sacred in non-religious terms comes from the modern ‘mystic’ Neil deGrasse Tyson.¹⁰ This is the video we will use in future programs to explain ‘sensing the sacred.’

The problem of explaining the sacred to non-religious audiences is an example of the larger issue faced by many contemplative educator/practitioners. How do we teach practices created within a specific religious context to wider audiences, and maintain the integrity of those practices without proselytizing? In terms of cultivating compassion, Andrew Dreitcer’s framework of capacities and the metaphor of translation offer a compelling answer.

Dreitcer identifies capacities as the “muscles of the interior life that do the work of the practice and grow stronger in the process.”¹¹ He identifies foundational and contemplative capacities necessary for cultivating compassion. Through this framework, Dreitcer creates the possibility for students to think about ‘practices’ in their own lives that hone these specific capacities, but have not necessarily been named in this way. Thinking about practices in this way maintains the rigors of cultivating compassion, while bringing new attention and awareness to students’ spiritual lives by asking them to see their daily lives in new ways.

¹⁰ Neil deGrasse Tyson, “The Most Astounding Fact,” March 2, 2012, ed. Max Schlickemeyer, video, 3:33, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9D05ej8u-gU>.

¹¹ Dreitcer, *Living Compassion*, 35. For a more detailed summary of capacities see chapter 3.

The metaphor of translating languages helps conceptualize the process of teaching and rearticulating contemplative practices to meet the needs of students. Translating languages is a complex and difficult process that involves a multitude of decisions for meaning making that are largely determined by context. Would the literal, poetic, or intended meaning make the most sense? The needs of one's interlocutors help determine the answer. Additionally, discerning the appropriate meaning and translation requires in depth knowledge of both languages and cultures. How does one go about translating a colloquial phrase from one language to another? For example, 'Let the cat out of the bag' is a confusing idiom if taken literally. Do you have cats? Why is one in a bag? Certainly, we should let your cat out of the bag. The translator must know the meaning of the idiom is to share secret information, and how to translate its meaning into the recipient language. Professional translators must have an in-depth knowledge of the languages and cultures between which they are translating. Even with this knowledge the process of translating does not always go smoothly. Yet, people all over the world engage the process of translating because they understand communicating and making meaning across languages is worth the effort, despite the associated complications. Teaching contemplative practices across traditions involves similar complications. It is not conflict or problem free. But, like translating languages I understand the importance of engaging in this process, and that it is ongoing and messy. The effort is worth it, but I must hold my conclusions and adaptations lightly, while continually measuring them against the bar of embodying compassion.

3. Dual Listening

Several participants commented on the importance of the music practice and dual listening. Their comments were significant and clarify the impact of the music practice for

understanding themselves and others. Emily explains how the music practice will help her understand how her own emotions influence her perception of others:

I think another really important thing that...exemplified that whole experience was the music and how you can talk about how the music makes you feel. You can also talk about specific characteristics of it. I think both are really important and I think that's true in everyday situations too – to be able to discern if your emotions are unfairly making you feel some way about someone. I think also we talked about how they're valid and they need to be tended to as well. I think that's just put into words a lot of how I feel sometimes that I haven't been able to put my finger on.

For Lauren, the music practice was a profound 'aha' moment during the program:

I really enjoyed when we listened to the music and you were talking about learning how to hear what was going on in it, and separating that from what it was making you feel. That was, to me, a really profound lesson that I thought was a great way to show that.

Logan expressed a desire for more opportunities to practice dual listening during the program:

I think it would be helpful to spend a little more time on dual listening, because we only did it for one class. I think dual listening, especially what the music's talking about and what we are actually thinking are two different concepts. I do think that is very helpful because I think it's very similar to taking the PULSE of other's in some sense, just more generalized, like dual listening. So, I think we should spend a little bit more time on dual listening.

Later, Logan emphasized learning dual listening at the beginning of the program:

I think we should do dual listening right at the beginning. I think that would be more helpful...Because if you don't know how to listen how can you engage the practice right? So, I think dual listening is an important key to open another gate.

The music practice and the dual listening skills it fosters are an important aspect of ERAST. Emily, Lauren, and Logan demonstrate the impact of this practice for their own learning. Their contributions confirm the music practice as a mainstay of the program. Logan's desire for more opportunity to practice dual listening reflects our similar concern. Honing capacities requires practice. Future programs need to incorporate regular opportunities to exercise dual listening skills.

4. Interracial facilitator impact

One of the curiosities I had about our program was the impact of an interracial facilitator pair. Chris and I both intuited that our interracial friendship was an important part of our approach. During the post interview, I asked participants if they thought our being interracial was important to them. Danielle offered a sanguine response demonstrating the impact of seeing positive examples of interracial friendships:

One thing that I really loved about this class was the black/white teacher dynamic. Learning about race and political issues can be extremely difficult, especially when students feel as though their teacher does not know where they are coming from. In having a white and a black teacher teaching such touchy topics, I feel like students feel more comfortable sharing their honest opinions. I do not know any black men who have a white man as their best friend & seeing this dynamic in the classroom was extremely refreshing. Additionally, I really enjoyed the perspectives and personal stories that both of you contributed to the class. Both of you guys were very good at balancing each other out and if one of you missed a point, the other one stepped in. I have never been in a class that has had two teachers before, however I can imagine that sometimes it may not run smoothly (yours always did). Having two best friends teaching the course could not be better, I personally wish that I could work with my best friend...that would be so dope.

Emily commented on the importance of our differing experiences for her learning. She also mentioned that our friendship was helpful for creating a safe classroom environment:

Both you guys lecturing and hearing both your experiences. Obviously, from not who you are, but just what you are, are very different points of view. So that was I think cool to see, not like you're on two different sides, but just because you're white and he's black, just the different experiences that you guys have had. I think...I could relate to you saying you tensed up or something like that. I think that was also good to hear too. Just that it's okay, that's fine if that happens, but you need to look inward, take the U-turn and think about why that occurred. I think your guys' dynamic of being really good friends is very apparent and made the whole class comfortable. It's a good environment. It's not a scary one, you can say what you think or what you've experienced or felt. It was very open, and I think both of you guys being honest about many different experiences was really helpful with that. I don't know if it would be like that if it was different professors.

Gabrielle emphasized the importance of Chris lending credibility to me as a white person teaching about race and racism. Here again, our friendship proved important. Gabrielle notes its encouraging effect on her understanding of how white people can be allies to people of color.

Later, she emphasized how our friendship contributes to the application of intellectual information in a personal way:

When you were talking, Dr. Carter was listening to what you had to say, and remembering things that you didn't mention and so as I said earlier knowing that a white person is for real. Then [pause] just kind of having a model. Like, no a white person can be a good ally to a black person and still go through this implicit bias stuff and not have that completely ruin their relationship, and they talk about it. Just knowing that that happens and that is possible is encouraging. To know that it's not just a professional relationship but that those types of personal relationships can work out. Oh, and then also the fact that you two are very close friends helps...Like the dressing up kind of thing. I think that if you were not friends, that kind of intellectualizing of a person of color's experience would rub me the wrong way. Kind of like, ahh I see how this fits into CRT in these four ways, so I can demonstrate that I know that I'm book smart about race. That's different because you're not just intellectualizing it. It's showing how to integrate intellectual information in a personal way and integrate it into personal relationships and daily life. So that would not have worked if you were just professionally linked.

Rebecca emphasized the importance of relatability along racial identity. She also pointed out the importance of seeing a white person who authentically cares about race:

I do think it was helpful because there's no black people in the class. It's predominantly white. I think it was great to have your perspective there. Cause it was something for them to relate. So, I feel like I had Dr. Carter to relate to, not that I didn't relate to you because some of your stories were very relatable. But to have that there I think that helped them. And I would say helped me too. To hear both sides. It was very refreshing to see a white person who actually cares about race and cares about how they carry themselves in the world with other racialized people. So, I think it did help.

The above excerpts demonstrate how participants experienced interracial facilitators, and show the advantages of such an approach to education about race and racism. Participants appreciated the insight our personal stories brought to their understanding of race, racism, and how to engage the practices we taught. However, participants also described a benefit of interracial facilitators is 'seeing both sides.' This description potentially reifies a false racial dualism, and could potentially contribute to perpetuating racial binary master narratives. While co-facilitators offering different lived experiences of race is certainly a strength, Chris and I are

limited by our own embodiment and racialization as black and white respectively. The reality of race is far more nuanced than our own racializations can show.

Our guiding assumption about stories was that face to face personal experiences would be more impactful than stories conveyed through reading, video, or some other form of media. This assumption raises a question for future research. Are the stories of people with whom we interact more impactful than those we read or hear about through other means? The answer to this question has implications for how to include stories from people with diverse identities. It may be helpful in future programs to incorporate stories from people racialized differently than ourselves. Creating a sense of inclusion and identity safety is of the utmost importance to me, and fulfilling this goal is an ongoing effort. Logan brought up similar concerns during his post-interview:

As a Chinese, as an Asian I always feel left over in racial conversations because we also receive unfair treatment, but people don't understand that...I think it is important to include...more different racial groupings, not just only black. I think it...would create a stronger sense of uniting.

His concerns lead to a discussion about how to address them in future programs. Logan affirmed our interracial approach as helpful, and suggested teaching dual listening earlier in the program as one possible solution. I asked if it would help if we included stories from different groups of people of color in our presentations. Logan responded as follows:

Definitely yes. But it would be challenging. It would be very challenging to do so. I think it would definitely be helpful to do that because the system is not only just against blacks. It is also against other non-whites...I think not just only...race, but also different religious groups, or different types of countries. I think that's important.

I concur with Logan that it will be difficult to incorporate the stories of other people of color into our curriculum. Yet, we must do so. We draw on our own stories because we understand their power to teach by example. Other people's stories are not less compelling, but

they are simply not our own. I do not wish to harmfully appropriate someone else's story for my own ends. We consciously decided to avoid this problem by drawing exclusively on our own experiences. It is clear that we must incorporate stories of people with racializations other than our own to "create a stronger sense of uniting." The starting point will be further research into narrative pedagogies and storytelling. In addition, documentaries, or video interviews we conduct ourselves, may provide possible ways to incorporate other stories and experiences.

Discussion of the Reflections and Observations

This section discusses the lessons learned and what I have gleaned from analyzing and coding the data. I focus on what participants found useful, what they did not find useful, and areas of confusion. I address participants' recommendations for improving future programs, our own desired modifications, and important critiques raised by participants. I also offer suggestions for how to implement some of these recommendations. My conclusions reflect my own interpretation and should be viewed as tentative, inconclusive, and questioning.¹² On a personal note, the research process has been fascinating and transformative for me. I came to care for the participants during primary research, and that care was deepened during data analysis. Every participant engaged honestly and thoughtfully in the material we presented. I am grateful for their participation, openness, and vulnerability, and have struggled with how to represent their contributions.

A possible benefit of ERAST for addressing audiences of varying racial awareness is the emphasis on education about race and racism coupled with the self-care dynamics of the compassion practice. Learning about race and racism parallels the process for learning other skills. The fundamental skills form the foundation upon which deeper learning can occur. In

¹² Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 187.

interracial environments, this can lead to frustration on the part of people of color, whose life experience provides a depth of knowledge about race and racism, while white people struggle to learn the fundamentals of race and racism. Self-care is an important focus for all efforts toward racial justice, but particularly for people of color. For example, Rebecca and Gabrielle entered the program with deep intellectual and experiential knowledge of race and racism. This did not change much throughout the program as we aimed to introduce students to CRT and racial formation rather than delve more deeply into those theories. However, they both found the self-care skills crucial for their own well-being and renewal as activists. In this way, audiences with varying racial awareness levels will find different aspects of ERAST beneficial.

Several participants understood intellectually *how* to have conversations about race, but expressed uncertainty and discomfort about actually engaging those conversations. Emily and Garrett, participants who identified whiteness being significant to their identity, emphasized the importance of not wanting to offend anyone during discussions of race. The desire to not offend manifested as silence and less active contribution. Reminiscent of Bonhoeffer, this kind of white silence becomes a form of consent and perpetuation of the racial status quo. For white people learning about race and racism, taking the leap to engage racial discourse despite our uncertainty and discomfort is paramount. Emily and Garrett both found the Compassion Practice helpful for addressing the discomfort that arose while taking this leap.

Participants of color identified self-care as an important component of engaging conversations about race. Danielle, Rebecca, Gabrielle, and Lauren all addressed the importance of the U-turn for helping them to remain grounded during conversations about race. This could be interpreted as a burden on people of color to remain calm when white people make offensive comments. However, Danielle, Rebecca, Gabrielle, and Lauren conveyed a sense of

empowerment when describing their new skills. For example, Rebecca expressed a sense of hopefulness because of the tools she found in the compassion practice. While Gabrielle emphasized how the language of the compassion practice has helped express her intuitive sense of what is right.

Logan's experience in the program represents one of the most profound transformations. As an international student with relatively little experience in the United States Logan's understanding of race and racism prior to the program reflected larger cultural narratives about race in the United States. He identified race as a "boring topic at the table," and seemed to view African Americans "always talking about race" as a distraction from solving race issues through education.

By the end of the program Logan expressed that race had "become much more broad in my mind." Referencing one of the readings on racial formation, Logan indicated "before this class I think racism is more narrow. What the book says, that it becomes so narrow no one can be racist." He indicated the racist nature of meritocracy, and advocated an intersectional approach to racial education. Most striking to me was Logan's interest in participating in an anti-racist march or protest. Logan's experiences demonstrate the possibility of ERAST to transform how participants understand race and racism, and engage anti-racist actions.

Garrett was the only participant who identified exclusively as white. His experiences help demonstrate the difficulty of learning about race for white people, and the often-inconsistent learning that takes place. Garrett intentionally engaged program material in a genuine effort to learn more about race. He indicated his desire to learn as follows, "This is a class about Black and Womanist theologies, I'm gonna go talk to someone whose not a white male about this. So, I

kind of took it upon myself to step out of my comfort zone. It would have been more comfortable hanging out in the back of the classroom with three of my buddies just talking.”

Language played an interesting role during the post-interview. Garrett expressed not wanting to identify as white, and that this is something he had learned during the program. While I felt an internal sense of discomfort and failure triggered by his responses, I also wanted Garrett to feel welcome and safe so that we could continue to explore what he had learned. As I continued to ask more probing questions I saw that Garrett did understand a number of key learning goals but lacked the language to express them clearly. This underscores the need for spaces centered on compassionate understanding. By continuing to reflect more deeply with Garrett rather than assuming I understood him at face value I saw that he had gained a deeper understanding of race and racism than when he started the program. He lacked the vocabulary to clearly express his new understanding.

While Garrett did gain a deeper understanding of race and racism he conveyed insufficient reflection and awareness of his own racialization. He expressed concern with categorizing people by race “because of the way we’ve handled race up until now I don’t want to categorize people by race.” This indicates he has gained some understanding of how race functions but that he is interpreting that knowledge through a colorblind view of race (solve racism by not talking about it). He articulated that racism is something people of color experience, but failed to understand his role in perpetuating racism and the function of whiteness.

My conclusion is that Garret learned a significant amount about race and racism. I think he authentically feels called to take some action. He was able to articulate several actions he would take in his own life, identified economic inequality as something that had been ‘bugging’ him, and even favored the idea of reparations, though he did not name it this way. However, his

level of racial self-awareness was relatively unaffected, and his understanding at the time of the interview conveyed a synthesis of our teaching with his embedded understanding of colorblind narratives. Garrett's experiences demonstrate the need to stress ongoing learning, humility, and a process oriented approach to racial education. Racial awareness is a life-long journey. I am grateful for Garrett's participation and thoughtful engagement.

We define contemplation broadly to incorporate practices that hone the capacities we want to cultivate but fall outside the purview of more narrow definitions focused solely on silent forms of meditation. Given our broad definition, we wrestled with whether to include silent meditation in the program. There was a limited amount of time for the program and avoiding silent meditation would allow us to side step the preconceived notions that many people have regarding meditation. In the end, we did incorporate a few silent meditations in class. The impact was mixed, and I think largely results from not devoting enough time to engage and debrief the practices.

Emily found the meditations during class challenging. We discussed her confusion in the post-interview where she related meditation to her own experience as an intern at an eating disorder clinic:

They say it's like a conveyor belt...So you can put stuff on it and it just goes away. Or a river and it just goes away. I don't know I just never knew that that's what it could be I guess. I always thought meditation, you don't think about anything...So I guess that was probably the best practice because now I feel like I understand it better.

Logan also expressed having difficulty with the silent meditation practices. His difficulty with the sacred moment practice reflects the rushed manner in which I lead the meditation:

We did the [sacred moment] practice...I think we can do that more often...But sometimes I think it would be good to tell us to do that before the class because sometimes we cannot come up with the memory that quickly. It takes a long time to come. Because sometimes when I was doing that practice the first thing that came up was

something from last week. But I know there is something more important, but I couldn't come up with it.

Rebecca also wanted more time for silent meditation, "so that it could stick." In addition, she expressed a desire for more time to debrief some of the exercises. When I asked if there were specific practices she wanted to de-brief she responded, "Maybe with the breathing exercises we had or the more meditation ones. I wish we could have done more practice with that...so that it could stick."

From these observations, it is clear that participants found the silent meditation practices interesting but needed more time engaging and contextualizing these practices, as well as debriefing them. I am persuaded by participants' interest in the silent meditations that they are important and should remain in the curriculum. In future programs, we will devote more time to explaining, engaging, and debriefing silent meditation practices.

Pre-Interview and Post-Interview Comparison

Comparing the pre-interviews with the post-interviews yields insight about what participants learned during the program. Though ERAST was short and intense, participants demonstrated understanding and embodiment of key learning goals.

During the pre-interview Danielle described how she responds in conversations with a close friend when they disagree. While her friend maintains a certain level of openness, Danielle is more stubborn. "If she tells me something I'm like no. I'm right, I'm stubborn. I don't google anything. I'm just like no my perspective is right."

After taking ERAST, Danielle emphasized understanding the perspectives of others as a helpful way to mitigate her own reactivity:

Definitely just being compassionate and understanding from the perspective of others and not taking it personally. Say someone says something to me, I don't wanna immediately become reactive, sort of see maybe where that's stemming from. Maybe they're super frustrated with themselves and placing it on me.

When I'm just more open and understanding of other people. It just stresses me out less. If someone is mean to me I'm like ok there's something wrong with you. There's nothing wrong with me, you need to get...I mean I'm compassionate to the extent that I will acknowledge that I'm not the problem, but I'm not compassionate enough yet to help the person...My brain just feels lighter. I don't know It feels emptyier. Stuff doesn't faze me as much.

Danielle's comments demonstrate growth in awareness of her own internal reactivity and the capacity to tend to it more constructively. In addition, she recognizes the difference between what someone says and her reaction to it, which helps her to remain grounded and un-enmeshed in the other person's energy. As Danielle says, she "stresses out less."

White people talking to other white people about race and racism is an important aspect of anti-racist living. Emily identified white as a significant aspect of her identity. During the pre-interview Emily described her comfort level having conversations about race:

I feel like I'm pretty comfortable because I feel like I'm very open minded, I would like to think. So, I feel it's just a comfortable conversation [trails off]. I like having deeper conversations and I feel like they don't happen that frequently. So, I think to have a class where you have the opportunity to talk about these things openly is really cool. It's not something I do often...I mean recently I guess more so maybe a little bit just with what's going on. I guess I don't talk about it that frequently, but I don't think it's something that's necessarily scary. I don't know. I guess cause it doesn't happen that frequently then maybe it seems kind of weird or like it might feel kind of awkward but I think it's cool to hear what other people think, especially because I can only see things from my point of view. I would like to hear other people's points of view.

During the post-interview I asked Emily if she felt more prepared to discuss race:

I feel like I will still need practice. Cause I still feel like nervous about it I guess. It's funny because it depends on who I am talking to. With my roommates... I'm like oh you guys this is crazy, we talked about this and I want to tell them all about it. Then in our class, or in our groups I'm more reserved because I am more nervous, I guess because my friends are white and they're my close friends. In class I don't want to offend anyone by saying something or not thinking of something – I don't know. You know what I mean? Or not realizing privilege or something. I do feel better equipped to, because of the practicing compassion, better equipped to talk about it if it did arise.

I feel like even just how I want to tell my roommates and my boyfriend, 'you guys you need to be aware, have you ever thought about how race is just not an innate thing.' I've talked to them about that, so I guess that in itself is like – I don't know. Cause

I feel like people don't think about it, especially at this university. Just realizing what other people have to go through, like Dr. Carter and people in our class. To make sure that I never perpetuate any of those things.

Though she does not identify as totally white, Emily shows the range of difficult feelings most white people experience during conversations about race and racism. Prior to substantive education about race and racism, it is common in my experience for most white people to describe themselves as comfortable talking about racial topics. This stems largely from ignorance of what it truly means to talk about race, as well as social pressure to not appear racist. Therefore, I see the discomfort she identifies in the classroom as a sign of growth. Furthermore, prior to ERAST Emily did not bring up the topic of race with her friends, though she found it interesting. By the end of ERAST she had actively initiated conversations about race with her friends, a primarily white context. This is a crucial and difficult action for many white people to take. Yet, it is an essential component of creating a more racially just world.

In her pre-interview Lauren emphasized concern for remaining civil during conversations with classmates. Later, she offered an example of a conversation with a classmate in which they disagreed:

Lauren: I have a friend whose very oblivious as far as feminism goes and so he was talking about safe spaces and how he thought they were dumb. He was just kind of blabbering on about it and we're not close enough for me to say something, like maybe you shouldn't say that or that's kind of offensive. We're close enough that he felt comfortable to say that around me, but we weren't close enough for me to say that kind of was...

Seth: call him on it.

Lauren: Yeah. Exactly. Maybe that's not an exact example of what I just said but that's one of the things where I've kind of witnessed that. It kind of made me uncomfortable but I didn't know if we were good enough that if I said it he wouldn't feel bad or that he wouldn't want to talk around me again.

In this conversation Lauren's concern for civility seems to have resulted in her silence. I see this as an example of the way cultural norms (i.e. concern for civility in public social interactions in this example) silence people of color. Lauren wanted to respond to her classmate's offensive comments but did not want to make him feel bad.

Toward the end of ERAST Lauren experienced a similar encounter. This time, however, she responded with the skills she had learned in the program:

I think the whole U-turn looking at yourself with compassion is really helpful, especially because I've noticed, at least recently, since we've been learning all this stuff that when I do feel overly frustrated at things that I kind of try to look at myself and say okay why are you getting so frustrated with this? Why are you allowing your emotions to take over the way that you're acting or feeling right now? And it's been really helpful because I've been put in a lot of situations where I wanted to say things that I'm probably, I'm glad I didn't. For example, my humanitarian engineering class the other day we were talking about activism and it was an interesting conversation and I didn't agree with what was being said. I felt myself in my seat wanting to scream, and not liking what people were saying about it. Instead I kind of like took a step back and said okay maybe they haven't had good experiences with it and this is why they are saying things. So, I tried to just provide an insight that hey maybe what you see is biased instead of saying no you're wrong or something like that. I'm hoping it was helpful in not creating a problem in class.

Lauren demonstrated the ability to ground herself during a difficult conversation in which she felt triggered. In addition, she was able to respond from her groundedness and contribute to the conversation in ways that were meaningful to her, unlike the conversation in her pre-interview.

For Gabrielle, withdrawing from relationships with white people was a recurring theme. In the context of recalling an argument with her white father about Black Lives Matter and police shootings Gabrielle commented "I would definitely say that withdrawing myself from those relationships is a huge way that I deal with those types of things." Later in the pre-interview Gabrielle described her different responses to being fetishized by Asian people and white people:

I feel like when Asian people fetishize me I'm like 'ewww' but also I kinda get why this is happening. When white people fetishize me I'm like 'ewww' and also I don't want to be around you anymore. I really just don't like you. I feel like there's no coming back from that. Whereas with Asian people I'm like okay let's work through this, let's figure

out you know, so you understand how problematic this is so you don't say it to another person. Whereas when white people do it, the relationship is broken.

While analyzing the interviews I was struck by an understandable undercurrent of anti-whiteness in many of her comments. I offer this not as critique, but to help contextualize Gabrielle's experiences. She grew up in a city "that has the highest concentration of Vietnamese people outside of Vietnam." Her childhood experiences were somewhat insulated from the reality of racism in the United States. Entering college, for her, also involved entering the brutal reality of racism in America for the first time. She shared her rough transition into this difficult reality during the pre-interview. Gabrielle's reluctance to engage and trust white people is a protective and reasonable response to the traumatic experiences she shared. Everyone would respond this way.

Modeling authentic interracial relationships was an intuitive foundation to ERAST. Chris and I both thought our friendship was an important component of legitimizing our program. During her post-interview, Gabrielle expressed similar sentiments:

It was an interesting choice. I don't know. It's interesting. Your dynamic, I think, worked particularly well because you know each other very well. It's not just that you think the work is important and you found someone else who felt the work was important so you do it together. It's that you do the work together already, that was important. When you were talking, Dr. Carter was listening to what you had to say and remembering things that you didn't mention, and so as I said earlier knowing that a white person is for real. Then [pause] just kind of having a model. Like, no a white person can be a good ally to a black person and still go through this implicit bias stuff and not have that completely ruin their relationship, and they talk about it. Just knowing that that happens and that is possible is encouraging—to know that it's not just a professional relationship but that those types of personal relationships can work out.

Gabrielle's comments demonstrate the importance for her of modeling interracial friendships for embodying anti-racist ways of living. For Gabrielle, this seems to be a significant insight from ERAST. Seeing that genuine interracial friendships are possible has provided her

with a reference point for creating them in her own life. In some small way it has also reaffirmed that interracial relationships can be worth the effort.

As mentioned earlier, the pre-interviews for Rebecca, Logan, and Garrett were largely unusable. For this reason, comparing their pre/post interviews is not possible. However, summary observations can still be made. Rebecca entered the program feeling resistant and annoyed. Having poor experiences of this type of program in the past she expected similar results here. Additionally, she was excited to take a class about her (Black and Womanist Theology) but was annoyed to start with our work. By the end of ERAST Rebecca expressed appreciation for learning self-care tools that will help her understand her emotions. “I know that I feel things but I’ve never taken the time to actually name them so I feel like doing a U-turn or checking my PULSE I will be more in tune with my emotions and hopefully better able to articulate them out loud.”

Logan was an international student whose formative experiences of race and racism did not occur in the United States. During the pre-interview Logan seemed to conceive of race and racism as largely between black and white people. Though not white, Logan’s comments reflected typical responses of white people with little education about race and racism. I remember feeling discomfort at some of his racist responses, but also curious to see how he experienced ERAST as he expressed curiosity and willingness to learn. I also wondered if he would be less committed to his views as an international student who was unconsciously participating in the major racial project of the United States – white supremacy.

At the end of ERAST Logan conveyed significant understanding of race and racism in the United States. He conceived of race more broadly and advocated for including stories from a wider range of people of color in future programs. Compellingly, Logan expressed interest in

participating in a protest for racial justice. He also named the foundational importance of PULSE, “...especially the first part paying attention to yourself. I think that’s the most important because other than that if you don’t understand yourself, you don’t understand your interior movement it’s just difficult to connect with others.”

Garrett is the sole participant who identified entirely as white. His pre-interview conveyed deeply entrenched colorblind narratives. The post-interview demonstrated his difficulty with deconstructing those narratives. Garret inconsistently inculcated the racial realities conveyed by CRT and racial formation theories with his colorblind worldview. Garrett’s desire and curiosity to learn about race and racism aided in learning important concepts. That is, he genuinely engaged the course material but awkwardly incorporated course concepts into his pre-existing colorblind view. The following excerpt demonstrates this process:

Garrett: I feel like we just put such negative connotations on race in general that I would just like to stop. I don’t think we can kind of flip around and go back to continuing to categorize people on race after we’ve done that and seen people in a negative light and then treated them that way and then try to flip around completely. I don’t see it possible to be honest.

Seth: To stop categorizing based on race. Is that what you’re saying?

Garrett: I don’t want to categorize people on race because of how we’ve categorized people on race, but I also don’t see it possible.

Seth: What I’m hearing is that it sounds like you are seeing some of the problems with how racial categorization works...

Garrett: yes.

Seth: And that’s led to a lot of oppression.

G: Yes.

S: Is it important then to understand, do you think, how we are raced? How those categories work?

G: I think it is to understand the oppression that people have gone through. I think you need an understanding to understand what people have gone through, maybe not in this generation, but what their ancestors have gone through and how they are affected by that now. So, I think you need an understanding. Because beforehand. Before this class. Before college. I don't know. We talked about in class about how people and minorities get scholarships and stuff like that. I'd be like oh that's not fair they get a scholarship. You know what I mean? But that was more of a misunderstanding on my part. I wasn't understanding why they were getting scholarships or why they were doing this.

This exchange demonstrates Garrett's awkward synthesis of ERAST course material with his colorblind view of race. His comments reflect two problematic colorblind narratives; (1) that racism can be solved by not categorizing people by race, (2) that racism is a thing of the past. However, he also recognizes that de-categorization is not possible. Put differently, Garrett is beginning to recognize that race is a social fact. This is a core tenet of racial formation theory. In addition, he acknowledges the existence of a wider context giving rise to the need for scholarship money being awarded to people of color. Significantly, Garrett later expressed reparations as a means of creating racial justice. I see Garrett's difficulty expressing understanding of race in this exchange as evidence of growth. His colorblind worldview has been challenged and he is attempting to incorporate ERAST course material into his understanding of race and racism. Yet it is incomplete, underscoring the need for more education. In the end, Garrett has demonstrated significant growth when considering his specific context. Garrett's journey of racial awareness and embodiment is far from over. Yet, should he continue this path I remain hopeful.

Critiques and Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. My embodiment as a white male certainly affected the kind of information given and the interactions with participants. While my whiteness was not a limiting factor for all participants, one participant named it as "sort of neutral."

Through this study I learned the importance of continually establishing my credibility as a race

educator. My whiteness is a potential barrier to learning for students of color, and it is my responsibility to name this reality and acknowledge their resistance as a source of wisdom and insight. I include this to demonstrate the complexity of white people teaching about race.

This study was also limited by an imprecise focus around the nuances of racial identity we sought to understand. The questions I asked reflected this unclear focus. The result was limited information about how participants understood themselves racially. In hindsight, this was inevitable as my own understanding of what I wanted to know was convoluted. Reflecting on the research process has led to clarity of distinction between what I asked and what I wanted to know. The question I asked during post-interviews was “Has your racial self-understanding changed?” Participants most frequently seemed to understand this to mean “Has their race changed?” This was not my intended meaning. I wanted to know if participants had a greater awareness of how their racial identity affects their experiences in the world after our program. However, this clarity of distinction within me was not present at the time of the interviews. While I was able to understand these dynamics with some participants, a more accurate assessment of participants’ understanding of their racialization was partially limited due to the unfocused nature of my questions.

The combined responsibilities of conducting the study and facilitating the program being studied created several difficulties. Data gathered from participant observation was limited due to the demands of my role as facilitator. Preparing each program session also restricted my ability to analyze data during primary research. Additionally, I am committed to the success of our program and am unsure how this commitment has affected data analysis and representation. I assume biases resulting from this commitment will show themselves to less partial readers.

A final limitation is selection bias due to volunteer participation. Participants volunteered to be in this study. It is likely that participants were already interested in issues of race and racism prior to this study, which provided a motivation for participating. Furthermore, the study was conducted in the context of a course on Black and Womanist theologies. Lauren's reflections accurately characterize this limitation, "I feel like you can give this [program] to people who agree with you and it'll help them, like it helped me. But the real change and help will come for the people that don't think they need it."

Gabrielle raised an important critique about the usefulness of the Compassion Practice for people of color:

I think it would have been useful...for you and Dr. Carter to have talked about how different aspects of the Compassion Practice have been or are most useful for people with different subjectivities. So, for example...for people of color attending to interior movements and allowing those to be justified and okay. Not pushing one's self to act, but instead just kind of practicing self-care. I think that's particularly useful for people who experience oppression...or people who are engaged in the work of social justice...Then other aspects of the compassion practice are particularly important to investigating whiteness.

This critique will certainly be incorporated into future versions of ERAST. Prior to this study we did not know how the Compassion Practice would be useful to people of color, beyond our mutual exploration of Chris's experiences with it. The results of this study have helped identify specific aspects of the Compassion Practice that are likely to appeal to people of color, such as the importance of self-care that Gabrielle and Rebecca named.

Gabrielle also offered a critique that warrants considerable attention due to its implications for my commitments as a white scholar, researcher, and educator about issues of race and racism. During her post-interview Gabrielle expressed the following about classroom dynamics:

The fact of having a primarily white class results in the discussion naturally centralizing a white perspective, which is not necessarily bad cause of the demographic of the class, and it's not like it's centralizing whiteness. It's just centralizing white perspectives on whiteness.

In Gabrielle's final reflection paper, however, these feelings seemed to have shifted or amplified. She wrote about her experiences in class as follows:

I wish there had been space during the class to allow folks of color to discuss things that would be most useful to them, such as the U-turn and self-care. I think expecting students of color to sit through and witness white students grapple with these things for the first time is a kind of injustice to those students of color. ...I understand there are difficulties with teaching to a politically/racially diverse audience, but I would hope that just being aware of the ways that ERAST seems to be written for a white audience effectively silences students of color. Also, the classroom conversations were largely oriented towards white folks sharing their experiences recognizing racism for the first time, and I think this was not prompted by the professors' questions, but this pattern was not necessarily interrupted by the professors. I think this could have been improved by professors opening up a space during discussion that would invite students of color to speak (thereby decentralizing the white perspective) or, instead of putting the onus on students of color to speak up, providing historical context for how white neoliberalism has dealt in respectability politics to silence folks of color.

Gabrielle's critiques are representative of the way many academic classrooms are conducted. As such, they need to be taken seriously. They are also an excellent example of alternative perspectives, which Robert K. Yin considers an important component of case study methodology.¹³ In addition, as a white male researcher, my own reflections and understanding of her critiques need to be viewed through the lens of a hermeneutics of suspicion. I disagree with her critiques, but my perceptions of them may very well reflect racist practices of white researchers. Shawn Harper expertly demonstrated how higher education researchers do not cite racism among the range of factors influencing outcomes of their research.¹⁴ Is it possible that my resistance to Gabrielle's critiques are grounded in such a color-blind response? Simply

¹³ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 203-204.

¹⁴ Shaun R. Harper, "Race without Racism: How Higher Education Researchers Minimize Racist Institutional Norms," *The Review of Higher Education* 36, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 9-29, <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2012.0047>.

addressing her critiques through reasoned counter arguments did not seem appropriate. Rather, to address this complex set of concerns I returned to the data and looked at how other participants of color characterized their experiences in the program, our interactions with them, and classroom dynamics. My motivation for returning to the data in this way was guided by the CRT theme of centralizing the experiences of people of color. Although filtered through my own interpretation, I have endeavored to provide the experiences of other participants of color to help contextualize Gabrielle's critiques as representative of her own experience.

Most participants of color spoke warmly of my interactions with them, the level of trust that had been created, and of the safe classroom environment we had established. Rebecca described the program as 'refreshing' for her after experiencing initial reluctance because of previous experiences with white professors:

I was pleasantly surprised by the Embodied Racial Awareness program and how much it resonated with me. I was reluctant at first because of the negative experiences that I've had with conversations about race in some of my classes, more specifically, every single one of my sociology classes at this university. This program ended up being very refreshing for me, because it took an approach to racial issues that I have never experienced before. Usually in my sociology classes I have to sit through lectures that are catered to white students who have never learned about race before which makes it very hard for me to want to be engaged in those conversations. However, even though I am already comfortable in my racial identity, and having conversations around it, I can take the lessons I learned in this program and apply them to race and any other area of my life.

During her post-interview Danielle expressed that having an interracial facilitator pair helped her to feel validated:

I feel like everything was so validated because there was a black man and a white man giving your opinions. And both you guys...can see from both perspectives. I feel like you especially are good with sort of seeing from a black aspect also.

Rebecca described the impact of interracial facilitators as 'helpful,' and 'refreshing:'

I do think it was helpful [to have interracial facilitators] because there's no black people in the class. It's predominantly white. I think it was great to have your perspective there. Cause it was something for them to relate to. So, I feel like I had Dr. Carter to relate to,

not that I didn't relate to you because some of your stories were very relatable. But to have that there I think that helped them, and I would say helped me too – to hear both sides. It was very refreshing to see a white person who actually cares about race and cares about how they carry themselves in the world with other racialized people.

In the context of talking about the impact of interracial facilitators Emily characterized the classroom environment as follows:

I think your guys' dynamic of being really good friends is very apparent and made the whole class I think comfortable. ...It's a good environment. It's not a scary one, you can say what you think or what you've experienced or felt. It was very open, and I think both of you guys being honest about many different experiences was really helpful with that. I don't know if it would be like that if it was different professors.

Danielle described the openness of the classroom environment as well: "I also feel like the unconventional class structure and the unique teacher dynamics created an extremely open and informative environment that helped foster my learning." Rebecca characterized her experience of the classroom as follows, "I enjoyed the stories. It felt very personal and...I didn't feel like I was being lectured at. I felt like we were having a genuine conversation where we all were learning together." Lauren expressed similar feelings about her experience in classroom:

I found value in the ability to discuss our thoughts within the class and even the small groups. ...I have the tendency to devalue my own opinions, so it was helpful not to get advice from others, but to know that they were listening without any intention of inserting their own opinion. We were all just trying to understand ourselves and facilitating that in each other. It was as if we were in the driver's seat making the turn and the other person with us in the passenger's seat saying, "Keep going!"

Danielle, Rebecca, Emily, and Lauren describe their classroom experience using words such as 'refreshing,' 'validated,' 'open,' 'not scary,' 'genuine,' 'learning together,' 'helpful,' and 'comfortable.' The sense conveyed by these descriptive words are inconsistent with feeling silenced, experiencing injustice, or centering whiteness. My conclusion is that Gabrielle's critiques represent her own experience and are not reflective of other students of color who participated in the study.

Nevertheless, Gabrielle does offer important critiques. We do intentionally incorporate the experiences of white people into our program. Reflecting on and understanding how we experience race is a crucial part of becoming more aware of race and racism. Balancing the needs of white students with the needs of students of color is one of the dynamics that arises in interracial learning environments. Striking an appropriate balance is highly context specific, and an ongoing effort for us. This class consisted of mostly white students, which may have led Chris and I to focus more on white students than we were aware. Again, the data from other participants of color suggest we did not. However, Gabrielle's critique underscores the importance of naming this aspect of our process. In future programs, we will name the recurring dynamic of centering whiteness that occurs in many classrooms and the ways this dynamic silences people of color.

Another influencing factor in participants' experience is small group discussion. While we set the tone and topic for discussion, small groups vary in terms of participant interest, knowledge level, and willingness to participate. These are factors largely outside our control and significantly impact how participants experience our program. However, several participants indicated enjoying the small groups, and suggested more time devoted to them would have been helpful. Lauren's reflections provide a representative example. She indicated more small group time would have helped her to better synthesize the program material into her own life:

I think maybe just more opportunities to talk in our little groups would be nice. ...I noticed that actually having those conversations with other students really helps kind of bring what you read in the book to your own experience. I really enjoyed talking to people about it because then they also provided other insight into what maybe I was thinking. We were able to walk through together and see how did this help you in other areas of your life?

Time is a crucial theme throughout our own and participants' reflections on the program. There was not enough of it and we wanted more for small groups, debriefing practices, and

practicing conversational skills and awareness. The desire for more time from participants and ourselves warrants developing ERAST into a semester long course, or a retreat. Reformatting in this way would allow participants more time to learn and experiment with the foundational contemplative skills that are necessary for more deeply engaging the complex issues of race and racism that comprise the second movement of the program. The contemplative conversation skills we seek to foster require intentional practice. In the time allotted we were simply not able to provide enough opportunities to practice these skills. While many participants practiced during their daily activities, we did not allow sufficient time for them to reflect on their efforts in class. Such a space would help participants assess how well they were incorporating the practices into their daily lives, as Lauren indicated above. In addition, a longer program would allow more time to be devoted to learning critical race and racial formation theories, and the crucial process of reflecting on the ways in which these theories inform their racial awareness and self-understanding.

Conclusion

The opportunity to teach ERAST and conduct a study about its effectiveness has provided a wealth of information for us to improve future programs. I am encouraged to continue developing ERAST and introduce it to wider audiences. I have personally benefited from this process as well. The interracial experiences that Rebecca and I shared are an excellent example of how compassion can motivate and sustain racial justice efforts. Rebecca entered the program reluctant because of prior experiences with similar programs. As the program unfolded, however, she became deeply interested in our work, which is evident in her data. Toward the end of the program Rebecca had been so moved by our work that she asked us to lead a workshop at a social justice conference she had co-created with other students. Chris was unable to co-lead the

workshop due to prior commitments, and we agreed that I should lead the workshop on my own. Rebecca attended my workshop on the day of the conference and thought it went great. For Rebecca (a black woman) to find the work that I (a white male) do important and affirming of her bolsters me during moments of despair. She wrote me a card to thank me for participating in the conference. I keep it on my dresser as a daily reminder of the importance of this work for changing people's lives and creating a racially just world. Her compassionate act re-grounds me whenever I doubt the power of compassion to address racism.

Appendix A
Informed Consent Form

University of [REDACTED]
Institutional Review Board

Research Participant Consent Form

For the research study entitled:

Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation: An Engaged Compassion Approach to Difficult Conversations About Race.

I. Purpose of the research study

Seth Schoen is a doctoral student in spiritual formation at the Claremont School of Theology. He is sponsored by Dr. Christopher Carter, a professor in the school of Arts and Sciences at the University of [REDACTED]. You are invited to participate in a research study we are conducting. The purpose of this research study is to assess the effectiveness of a compassion-based approach to engaging difficult conversations about race.

II. What you will be asked to do

If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Fill out a demographic form.
- Participate in two 60 minute audiotaped interviews outside of class. The first interview will be conducted before the study begins and the second after the study has concluded. The interviews are designed to gain insight on how you understand race and compassion.
- Note: You will be audiotaped during the interviews only.
- Write eight short reflection papers. These papers are focused on understanding how your awareness of race and compassion shift over the course of the study.
- Engage in seven plenary sessions.
- Complete the readings in preparation for each class session.

Your participation in this study will take a total of approximately 23 hrs.

III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts

Sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day:

Mental Health Hotline at 1-800-479-3339

University counseling center:

<https://mywellness.sandiego.edu> Use your University username and password to logon to the portal. Phone number: (619-260-4655)

IV. Benefits

While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped researchers better understand how well this program prepares people for having compassionate, grounded, and respectful conversations about race and racism.

V. Confidentiality

Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher's office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this study will only be reported as a group, and not individually.

VI. Compensation

You will receive no compensation for your participation in the study.

VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you're entitled to, like your health care, or your employment, or grades. **You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.**

VIII. Contact Information

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

1) Seth Schoen

Email: seth.schoen@cst.edu

Phone: (402)-770-1748

2) Christopher Carter

Email: christophercarter@sandiego.edu

Phone: (269)-317-2742

I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Name of Participant (**Printed**)

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix B
Demographic Data Form

Demographic Data Form

1. Age:

2. Gender:

3. Religious affiliation, if any:

4. Ethnicity:

5. Racial self-identification:

6. Sexual orientation:

Appendix C
 Embodying Racial Awareness for Social Transformation Outline

The following outline was submitted as part of the IRB process. During the course of the study, however, last minute changes were made based on our (Chris and Seth) assessment of learning goals relative to students' facilitation and comprehension of them. In this way we did not adhere rigidly to the following outline.

Day 1 - 1/26, Thursday

Attendance

Go over syllabus

Introduce Study - What do contemplative practices have to do with Black Theology?

- Learn how to talk about theology and race - not common and challenging for lots of people
- We will be using African and African American contemplative practices; there is a contemplative tradition within black religious culture
- Students will be able to get more out of the readings if they approach them with the skills that we will be cultivating the first few weeks of class
 - Maybe video showing conversations about race gone wrong?

Introduce ourselves

- begin creating a safe space through stories
 - story of how Chris came to this work
 - story of how Seth came to this work
 - story of why we do this work together
- whiteboard exercise
 - name emotions that you usually experience during conversations about race
 - reflection on whiteboard exercise (what came up during whiteboard exercise)

Handout consent forms

Invite students who may want to be interviewed to email Seth to set up an interview before the next class.

Day 2 - 1/31 Tuesday

Readings to be completed for the class: Practicing Compassion, Invitation and Chapter 1

Things to pay attention to in the reading: Do you see the reading connecting to race; in your own life; in conversations about race?

Learning outcomes: Introduction to contemplative practices, distinguish between two types of listening, show students how this applies to the skill of reading about race.

Agenda

- Consent Forms
- Student introductions

- Code of conduct
- Contemplative Practices
 - Grounding practice - Sacred moment awareness or connecting with your breath.
 - deep listening skills
 - music practice (covers internal and external awareness)
 - Emphasize non-judgmental, non-reactive stance toward ourselves and others
 - Welcoming Presence meditation
- Homework
 - Daily engagement exercise
 - Self-clearing exercise in response to reading

Day 3 - 2/2 Thursday

Readings to be completed for this class: Practicing Compassion, chapter 2

Things to pay attention to in the reading: What does being grounded feel like to you, in your own body?

Learning outcomes: Continue to develop contemplative practices, begin to introduce race and racialization into the course

- Homework assessment
 - What did you notice within conversations with friends/family?
 - Share story about renting an apartment in San Diego
 - What did you notice about the “provocative” readings? Were you reading differently than in the past?
- Compassionately Engaging our Racialized Reactions (worksheet practice)
 - See ‘Contemplative Exercises’ section below for a fuller description
 - Introduce practice and name its purpose
 - Deepening our understanding of an interior movement
 - Reflect on the experience of the practice
 - Ask participants to share what they would like to about their experience during the practice.
 - Provide space for students to help the moment soak in
 - Unpacking the practice
 - After sharing has concluded, invite a meta conversation about the practice itself - insights, obstacles, or questions involved in practicing it.
 - Does this make sense? Was it generative for you? Do you have any new insights about this part of yourself?
- Homework
 - *Deepening Your Understanding of an Interior Movement* (pg. 77)
 - Wisdom Response paper

Day 4 - 2/7 Tuesday

Readings to be completed for this class: Practicing Compassion chapter 3, section of Racial Formation

Things to pay attention to in the reading: how racial formation projects are articulated, race as master category, how we cultivate compassion for ourselves.

Learning outcomes: Begin to introduce racial formation theory so students can begin to understand how race functions in society (utilizing the contemplative awareness skills we have been cultivating); African American contemplative practice, Story pair exercise

- Grounding practice. Connect with your breath (pg.55 *Practicing Compassion*)
- Racial Formation; historical approach
 - Creation of race; creation of whiteness; a sociological system that we live within; while it is not “real” it just “is”
 - racialization is not just an American phenomenon (theory of martial races)
 - Race is not “good” or “bad” it just is (money as a comparative analogy); in this step we are pushing against the notion of colorblind racism and essentialist racism
- Processing Another’s Experience with Them (story pair exercise)
 - See ‘Contemplative Exercises’ section below for a fuller description
 - Facilitators model the story pair exercise; discussing our first encounters with Racial Formation Theory. Ask students to reflect on themselves as racialized. How does racial formation theory apply to you?
 - Ask the students to identify the contemplative capacities/skills we were employing.
 - Story Pair exercise - students share with each other the self-clearing from the Racial Formation reading; noticing what is coming up within them vs. what is being said by the storyteller.
 - Group Reflection on Story Pair Exercise
 - Help the students concretize the experience of being raced personally.
 - Students share their inner awarenesses and insights about what it means to be raced for themselves. What is coming up for them?
 - Facilitators model the sharing through telling each other stories in front of the group.
- Homework
 - Take implicit bias test
 - Wisdom Response paper

Day 5 - 2/9 Thursday

Readings to be completed for this class: Practicing Compassion chapter 4; section of Racial Formation

Things to pay attention to in the reading: notice how cultivating compassion for ourselves is the same process as cultivating compassion for others, difference between race and racism, authors’ understanding of power, consequences of racial despotism.

Learning outcomes: Understand and articulate Racial Formation, Implicit bias, Critical race theory & structural racism, compassion for others

- Grounding Practice - either sacred moment or connecting with your breath.
- Racial Formation theory - American racial project
 - Defining race and racialization as a political and ideological project; social darwinism
 - Embodying race, racial formation; the ideology of race and its social implications (Birth of a Nation; racial “performance” (what is racial performance today, what

is it for white people today?) Boondocks, Tom DuBois; what would it look like to “act” Chicano, etc.

- Practice - how does this change your worldview; how you see others; how you see and understand yourself?
 - Facilitators share stories of how racial formation has changed our worldview, and how we see and understand ourselves.
- Implicit bias
 - Connect implicit bias to racial formation, i.e. we have been “formed” to view whiteness as normative and better than “others”
 - Connect implicit bias to structural racism; this way of thinking allows structures that marginalize people to continue with minimal distress
 - Speak about Nibert’s logic of oppression (3 ways oppression works) and how implicit bias perpetuates structural oppression
 - Enlightenment project
 - Practice - how does this change your worldview; how you see others; how you see and understand yourself?
 - Goals
 - Cultivate skills of deep listening, compassion for oneself and others.
 - Help students process what they just learned in terms of racial formation theory and implicit bias.
 - Story of myself viewing whiteness as normative and black as dangerous.
- Wrap up practice
 - Group reflection on our emerging awareness of ourselves as racialized.
 - Provide a holding space for complex feelings around growing awareness of our racialization.
 - Reaffirm the interconnectivity of humanity.
 - draw out themes of compassion for the self and compassion for the other
 - We are all bound up in this racial system and are hurt and privileged by it in various ways. We need to begin understanding our role in this system, how we are racialized and how that shapes who we are. And then, begin to compassionately connect with one another so that we can affirm each other’s humanity and yearning to flourish.
- Homework
 - Hearing the cry of a beloved or friendly other practice (pg 98)
 - Wisdom Response paper

Day 6 - 2/14 Tuesday

Reading to be completed for this class: Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Things to pay attention to in the reading: major themes of CRT

Learning outcomes: Be able to articulate the major tenets of CRT; how do these tenets apply to their lives

- Grounding Practice - either sacred moment or connecting with your breath.
- Critical Race Theory

- Introduce key concepts in CRT
- Contemplative Practices that help students embody knowledge and lead to transformation
 - Story Pair Exercise
 - See ‘Contemplative Exercises’ section below for a fuller description
 - Share with each other a story about the first time you noticed you were being ‘raced’
 - Group reflection on Story Pair Exercise
- Homework
 - Complete Discerning a Compassionate Action (p.126)

Day 7 - 2/16 Thursday

Reading to be completed for this class: Practicing Compassion chapter 5 & the hope

Things to pay attention to in the reading: How compassionate action can be embodied, signposts for discerning compassionate action

Learning outcomes: Action is a key component of transformation and embodiment, compassionate actions can take many forms, authenticity rather than size is most important

- Grounding practice
- Share examples of compassionate action in the world around issues of race and racism
 - Story of the work that Chris and I do as an example of compassionate action
- Group reflection on deciding what to do
 - How have we been changed by this process?
 - What are we feeling called to do with this new awareness about ourselves and others?
 - How does what we have learned change how we interact with ourselves, our family, community, the world?
 - videos, profound and mundane examples of race compassion in the world (Video of 2 guys from Kentucky on “Amazing Race”)
- Discernment Process
 - How are we called? What ideas, thoughts keep recurring, won’t let go?
 - Maybe simply continue to practice being aware of and tending to your own reactions and emotions.
- Setup final interviews

Appendix D
Sample of Contemplative Practices Used in ERAST

Compassionately Engaging our Racialized Reactions
(worksheet practice)

1. Ground yourself by taking several deep breaths.
2. Recall one of the reactions you noticed from the whiteboard exercise or over the past few days that stirred something within you. Perhaps a powerful emotion, thought, inner voice, or impulse to behave in some way that you have found difficult to be with.
3. Spend some time ‘Paying Attention’ to this reaction. Extend it a non-judgmental and welcoming presence of care that genuinely seeks to understand its experience. (NOTE: If you are feeling anything other than non-judgmental open curiosity and compassion toward this stirring, then another feeling/emotion has slipped in -- notice that movement then invite it to relax until you genuinely feel open and curious toward it.) Invite it to embody its experience by sensing:
 1. What gender would it be?
 2. How old would it be?
 3. Is it raced in a particular way?
 4. What does this reaction look like as it experiences this emotion (its facial, expression, its bodily posture, its attire, etc.)?
 5. What is the reaction feeling and experiencing in the situation that activates it?
4. Cultivate an awareness of the personified reaction by developing a deeper understanding of it through asking it the following questions:
 1. What fears does it carry?
 2. What longings pulsate within it?
 3. What aches or ancient wounds are sensitive and still haunt it?
 4. What gifts or joys excite it and yearn to flourish more fully?
5. After you have finished this conversation, invite the personified reaction to summarize what it has shared with you through filling in the following:
 1. “Whenever I (the personified reaction) get activated, I need you to hear and understand _____; in short, I long for _____”
6. Before completing this practice, discern any invitation of one concrete way you might extend this personified reaction compassion or participate in their flourishing. What is the deep wisdom or deep truth that is underneath this reaction that really needs to be heard and honored in conversations about race? What is the wisdom that wants to be shared?

7. After you have finished this interview, think of a physical object that represents or symbolizes this persistent interior movement. Make sure the object is something you can carry with you for a few days (for example, a coin, stone, button, bead, cross, acorn, ring, etc.).
8. If it feels right to you, conclude your reflection by inviting any sacred reality you know - the Buddha, God, Jesus, the loving energy of the universe, a healing image a beloved ancestor - to be with the personified interior movement in whatever way feels healing and life-giving.

Speaker and Listener Exercise
(story pair practice)

The purpose of this practice is to help deepen and expand the experience that comes out of our time in conversations about race and our sense of compassionately connecting with other persons' experiences.

In this kind of listening, we are not waiting for a chance to speak, or hoping for an opening to deliver some morsel of wisdom. Rather, we are attending to what is happening with us in the moment of listening to our experience or another's.

At the most basic level, this process simply involves receiving what we and others say with gracious, open acceptance, so that we might reflect it back without the weight of our own agendas. In this way, the listener becomes a safe receptacle for hearing experiences into greater life.

For this exercise you will need to find a partner. Within each pair one person will have the role of the listener and the other will be the speaker. The speaker will have about 5 minutes to share.

- 1) Task of the speaker
 - a) Share your story, recalling when you first remember coming to some awareness about race.
 - b) Remember to speak slowly to allow the listener full opportunity to hear.
 - c) When journaling, ask yourself these questions - what did you notice within yourself as you told the story? What did you notice about the listener as you told your story? (i.e. body language, presence, eye contact, energy)
- 2) Task of the listener
 - a) Listen to the speaker's story.
 - b) Pay attention to what you notice about the speaker and their experience of sharing a story.
 - c) Notice and set aside any judgments you might have or any desire that arises within you to "fix" the speaker.
 - d) Pay attention to what you notice within yourself in response to the speaker's story.

- e) If while you are listening to your partner you begin to recall a similar experience of your own - call yourself back to the present moment.
- f) When journaling, (1) write down what you noticed about what you heard the speaker say, and on another section of the paper, (2) write down what you noticed within yourself as they were sharing their story.

When finished, we want to invite both the listener and speaker to spend about 3 minutes or so in quiet and jot down your answers to the prompts (1c and 2f), and then switch roles.

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